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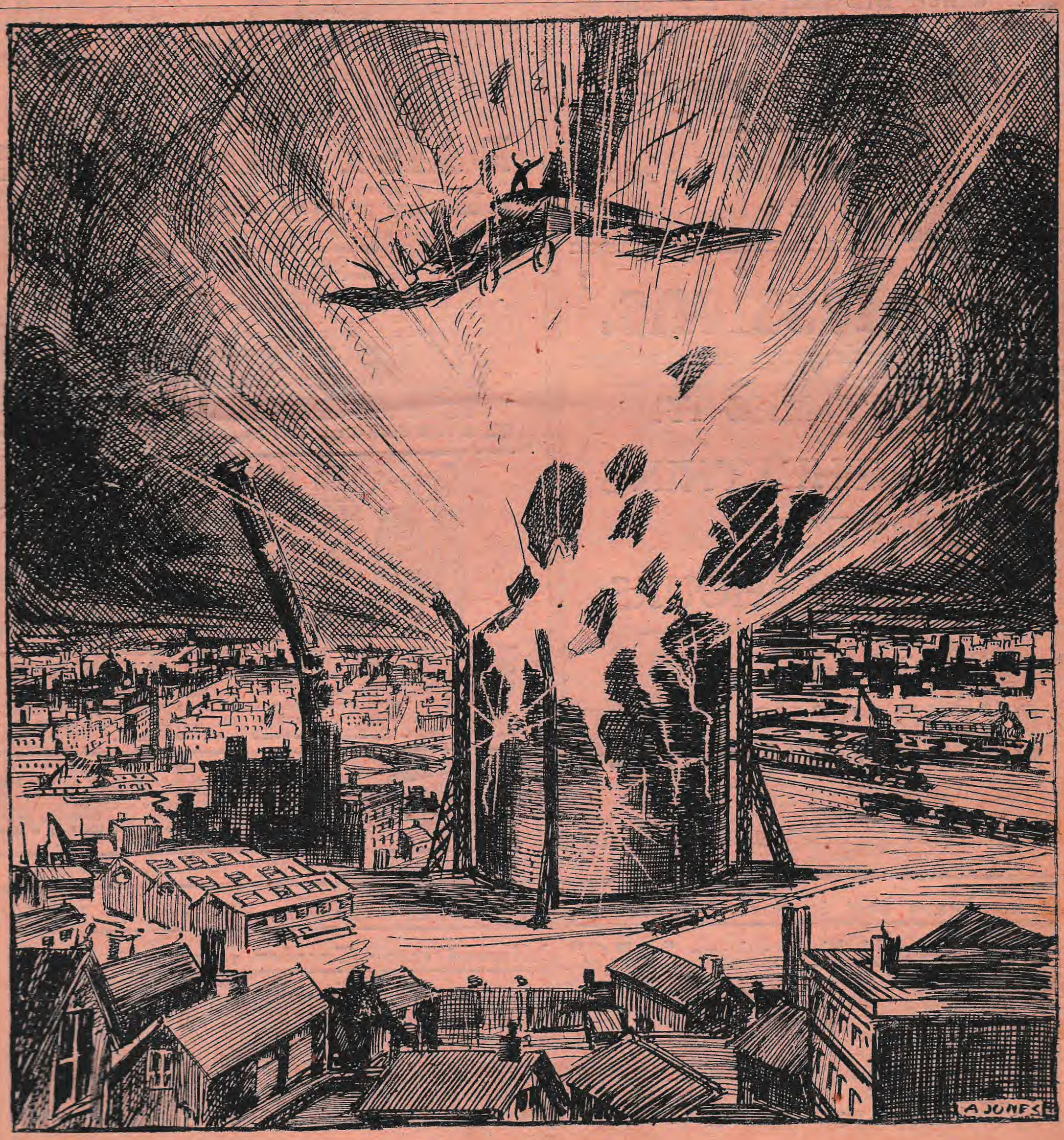

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> And lonely hearts feel doomed for evermore!

CHAPTER I.

The Last of the Blackbirders.

Captain Chance took a brown jar of spirits from the locker in his cabin, and poured a liberal measure into his glass. He drank the fiery stuff almost neat, with the cheerless air of one accustomed to solitude and the bottle, and then filled up again.

A shambling step sounded outside the cabin door, which was suddenly pushed open wide enough to admit the enormous head and hulking shoulders of a man with flaming red hair.

"All the fresh water in one o' the casks has run away in the night," announced the new-comer gruffly. "Had we better send the boat ashore again afore we sail? There must have been a leak."

The captain of the schooner Lone Star turned, glass in hand, and looked sourly at his mate.

"O' course there was a leak!" he blazed up, banging down the empty tumbler. "Didn't I see it myself, and tell Bantry to take it in hand? Where is the swab? What's he aboard this hooker for if it ain't to do as he's told? I'll have him aft, I will—him and the other lazy skunk, Holroyd, as he calls himself. Ay, and esquire, if you please!" He let out a choice oath. "A pair, they are—a lubberly pair o' beachcombers, and more fool me for ever signing of 'em on."

The red-headed Hawkins—a man of few words always—said nothing to this, but glanced at the brown jar. Captain Chance put a second glass alongside his own, and his mate promptly came right into the cabin, shut the door, and leaned his broad back against a bulkhead, regardless of the cockroaches which swarmed upon the woodwork.

"We might have the leak caulked," he said, "and get a fresh fill."

"Not me," said the skipper, bending to shoot a glance through the porthole. "There's been too much picnicking for the men on this blamed island. We're going to get the wind at last; and as for the water—be durned to the lot of 'em. They'll have to go short, same as the Kanakas in the hold."

Hawkins nodded, took his glass, lifted it out of habit to the captain, and drank slowly.

"There was two of the Kanakas dead this morning," he said, sucking his tongue.

"Ay, and you didn't need to talk about it," came the irritable rejoinder. "A lively lot this time, sink me, soul an' all! But there it is; the bottom was knocked out of this here trade long ago, what with the Navy people scouting round, and the Queensland Government flyer than ever, and the niggers, too, curse 'em! There's few of us at the game now, Hawkins—maybe I'm the last." He smiled grimly. "Here lies the last of the Blackbirders! Nice sort of thing to have put upon your tombstone, eh?"

"If you're lucky enough to get one," added Hawkins, with the same ghastly humour.

The captain nodded.

"You may say that, for the luck's dead out this voyage, and we'll be lucky if we hit the mainland once again. I believe the devil and all came aboard with them two scallywags. Where are they now, Hawkins?—the carpenter chap, as the Cockney calls himself. Carpenter, by glory! And Holroyd, what's he doing?"

"I had some of the Kanakas up from the hold for a bit o' exercise," said Hawkins. "Holroyd's watching them."

"Do him good," chuckled the skipper. "Him with his lahdy-dahdy airs, and his nose stuck so high. Ah, I've seen him. This hooker ain't good enough for him, and he don't like the cargo. But it's not for him to pick and choose, I guess, and only let him come any of his airs with me! I'll——"

In the act of reaching for the brown jar, Captain Chance paused suddenly, rearing his head to listen; and as he did so his small, round, watery eyes seemed to bulge with a terrible fright. So far there had been no noises about the ship save the steady squeak of a rusty pump; but all in a moment there had sounded a wild scream of agony, and now the air was filled with a medley of shouts and howls, and the patter of many naked feet.

"By thunder," roared the skipper, "it's the Kanakas! They've broken out!"

He dashed for the door, turned back to snatch a loaded revolver from the table, and then made a stumbling rush for the deck, Hawkins following hard upon his heels.

In the open both men fetched up with loud gasps, daunted for the moment by the hurly-burly which confronted them as they looked forward along the decks. Out of the noisome hold a black mass of humanity was rising in a never-ending stream, so that the whole ship looked like some mighty ant-heap freshly turned over. The Kanakas—most of them all but stark naked—were swarming the deck and alleyways to the number of at least a hundred, and in the midst of this sinister mob of stampeding savages three white men only were striving to gain the upper hand, one of them laying about him furiously with a belaying-pin, whilst the other two banged right and left with their bare fists.

The rest of the crew—excepting the Chinese cook, who seemed to have been knocked out of his senses—had huddled right forward into a cringing, panic-stricken group.

Unintelligible cries mingled with the slap-slap of bare feet and the fierce yells which sounded as whole batches of the wretched slaves—for such the Kanakas might be called—were sent tumbling back headlong into the dark hold. Here and there on the swarming deck a man went down, and others promptly tumbled over him, and there they would lie, a kicking, struggling mass, unable to rise again for the mob that surged around. The barbaric fury of the whole scene was intensified by its peaceful setting—that dirty, evil-smelling ship, with its hordes of naked human beings, rocking gently on the placid sea, with an island-like fairyland not a cable's length away, and a tropic sun blazing down from the heavens.

Captain Chance was a man of action when it came to a crisis. Out shot his right arm, and once, twice his revolver cracked in the air. Instantly the wild fight was checked, scores of Kanakas cowering down like so many frightened beasts. Then, somewhere well forward, there was a fresh disturbance as one naked figure leapt on to a rail and poised itself for a dive.

Bang went the revolver; and it was a dead Kanaka who went over the side into that shark-infested sea.

With his weapon smoking at the barrel, Captain Chance glared out across the mob of cringing natives.

"Get amongst them, Hawkins," he called to his trusted mate, without looking round. "We'll have the hatches on them after this! What's up with the Chink?"

The Chinese cook had picked himself up, and was shuffling towards the galley with a broken saucepan in one hand, whilst with the loose sleeve of his other arm he seemed to be wiping tears from his almond eyes.

Hawkins, with a nerve that justified the captain's faith in him, went forward weaponless into the very thick of the mob, and a moment later he was hurtling out a string of strange-sounding orders in the native tongue. From a passive, slow-moving man he was suddenly transformed into a raving giant, shouting, gesticulating with his long arms, pushing and thrusting violently. The Kanakas let their shoulders droop with an air of submission that was pathetic, and in sullen silence they began to crowd back into the filthy pen, anyone who ventured a backward glance finding himself covered by the captain's weapon.

"Mr. Hawkins," roared the skipper, "send Bantry aft to me, with Holroyd."

With that he turned his back and waited, enjoying his own importance and smiling grimly to himself over this opportunity of bestowing a verbal thrashing upon the "scallywags." When he swung about to face them, his first action was to spit hard at their feet.

"Huh!" he said, looking the two up and down. "And what d'you think o' yourselves, eh? Sink me, soul and all, you're a choice pair!"

They certainly were as strange a pair of white men as one would ever expect to find, even in that island world of the wide Pacific, where foam-embroidered shores are freely scattered with human flotsam.

Holroyd, much the taller of the two, had the lean, wiry frame of a hardy Britisher, and in his handsome face and steady eyes there was a look of refinement and quiet courage which could only be expected to gall a man of Captain Chance's nature. He didn't look a born waster, this handsome, straight-standing fellow of nineteen, yet there was the half-ashamed air about him of one who has "gone under."

Bantry was a mere shrimp of a lad beside his companion. Every inch a Cockney, he stood with his feet turned inwards and his knees slack, and his shoulders were dreadfully narrow. But there was something very likeable about his sharp face, whilst the pert way he held his head seemed to say to everybody, "I'm as good as you!" And perhaps he was.

"Now see here, I'll take you first of all," burst out the skipper, with a pugnacious thrust of the head at Holroyd. "We'll go into this little matter of the Kanakas. I don't reckon to have a rumpus of that sort on my boat. If a man's left in charge, I expect him to be equal to the job. You're new to the business perhaps?"

"I am," cut in Holroyd tersely. "This is my first experience of the slave trade—blackbirding I suppose you prefer to call it—I assure you it will be my last."

"Even if you have to starve for it!" jeered the captain. "But you can drop that sort of talk, my fine fellow. There's no gallery to play to; and that wasn't the way you talked either when I picked you off the beach, way back on the mainland. Starving you were then—a bag o' bones ready for the birds to peck at. And now——"

He paused, bit off the end of a cheap cigar, and took stock of the young man who faced him with dauntless eyes.

"By thunder," the bully blazed forth again, as he struck a match, "I've bin too easy with you! Too much good food and not enough hard work! You skulking lubber! You ain't good for anything, not even for keeping a dozen niggers walking round the deck!"

"Let me explain——"

"I don't want no excuses!"

"But I insist upon telling you one thing," cried Holroyd, with a forward stride that checked the skipper open-mouthed. "The Kanakas—Heaven help the poor wretches! They are little better than sheep, and I could almost wish they had more fight in them. They were taking their turns quietly enough; there would have been no upset but for that beast of a Chinaman."

"Ay, ay, blame the Chink!" sneered Captain Chance, puffing at his cigar. "Well, Tom Jesty," he growled, as another of the deck hands came up and saluted, "what the blazes do you want?"

The new-comer was the man who had taken his stand with Holroyd and Bantry in the recent melee—a brawny man, with a golden beard and a body like a barrel.

"If so be as I might speak, cap'n," he said, "'tis as th' lad says, sir. The Chinkie begun it. One o' th' Kanakas rolled against him, and he ups with a pot o' scalding water and flings it over the nigger. Ay, sir, and if the lad here hadn't broke the Chinkie's head, you may lay to it I would ha' done the job myself!"

"Syme 'ere!" chimed in the Cockney cheerfully.

Captain Chance glowered upon him for a moment, then turned to resume his baiting of Holroyd.

"Now, see here," he said. "You've got to learn a few things afore you're an hour older. One is that my cook's worth a dozen Kanakas any day in the week. Supposing he did scald the nigger, am I to have my dinner spoilt for that? And another thing, Mr. Holroyd, Esquire. Ye'll please remember I'm skipper aboard this hooker. I was master o' my own vessel afore you was born, and I can smell mutiny before others see it. I know your sort—just the sort as puts the men

against their skipper. I've spotted your tricks already, you see, and if there's going to be any more of 'em, I'll soon settle your hash. 'Twouldn't be the first time I've put a man ashore to save feeding him in irons!"

Holroyd drew himself up, the Cockney and Tom Jesty looking to him as if they trusted him for their spokesman.

"I'm not going to be bullied and hazed like this," he said quietly. "I've got to see the voyage out, and I'm ready to obey you as man to man. But I won't be bullied, and I'm not going to stand by and see those poor wretches tortured by you or anybody else. What I've seen since I've been aboard this cursed vessel—that cargo of helpless slaves, packed closer and treated worse than cattle — it's made me mad, I tell you —it's made me mad!" And he clenched his fists and gave a great sob of anguish.

The captain spat over one shoulder.

"You and this other whipper-snapper" — pointing at Bantry— "you'll go for'ard and do as ye're told by me and Mr. Hawkins. As for the Kanakas, they're my business, not yours. We're going to work 'em to Queensland, and for every one as dies on th' voyage there'll be a reckoning 'twixt you and me. I ain't in this trade for my health, my lad, nor yet for pleasure. Not like the kid-glove skippers you've been used to!" he added, with an evil leer.

Holroyd turned white under the tan on his lean face He recoiled a step, breathing fast, and Tom Jesty and the Cockney swung towards him in bewildered surprise.

Captain Chance gave a malicious chuckle.

"Ay, you didn't dream as I had tumbled to that?" he went on. "But it ain't so long ago as I saw the Sydney papers; and I've got a memory for faces. Besides which, there's the Navy touch about you. But they couldn't learn you to obey your superior officers seemingly."

He rolled the cigar to the other side of his mouth. "They wanted me there, Mr. Harry Royden—for that's your real name, and you're a deserter from the Navy!"

The young man made a little helpless gesture, like one warding off a blow. He gazed at the Cockney, who merely gaped back; then he turned to Tom Jesty, who scratched his golden beard in perplexity.

"Ay," chuckled Captain Chance, "they wanted me there! I'd like to see any man strike me on my own deck. A puppy o' your size—why ——"

Straight and hard a fist shot out, and the hulking bully went crashing to the deck.

"Stop!" panted Royden. "It's true enough what you say about me, but there's my side to the matter. You don't understand; I wouldn't trouble to explain to a man of your stamp."

"My stamp!" blazed up the skipper, dropping his cigar. "Say that again, you swab! Give me another bit of your insolence and I'll have a rope's end about you. Down with your hands—stand back, by thunder, or I'll kick you round the ship! You lying fraud! You dirty defaulter! You——"

There came a sharp snap as the captain's teeth closed together, almost biting through his tongue. Twice Royden had lifted his hands and then forced them down again by a desperate effort. But in the midst of that foul stream of taunting jeers he had lost control of himself, and straight and hard his fist had shot out, catching the skipper on the point of his stubbly chin.

The hulking figure crashed full length on the planking; but in a moment the bully scrambled up and was bellowing like a mad bull, whilst he wiped the blood away from his lips with the back of one hand.

"You hound! Sink me, soul and all, if I don't have you in irons for this! Ay, but that's too good for you! Here, Hawkins," he roared, as the mate came stumbling aft with a couple of villainous Portuguese at his heels. "Hold that swab—seize him! The boat, there! You, Jesty, bring her alongside! D'ye hear me?"

The sailor turned reluctantly to obey, but he quickened his movements as he saw the Portuguese running to to carry out the ominous order. Hauling in the open boat that had been idly rocking astern, he slipped over the rail and dropped his great bulk into the stern sheets. With a curious look in his eyes he got out an oar, and then stood listening to the hubbub up above, where the captain, all his face by this time streaked with blood, was dancing around and shaking his fists at Royden, by now a passive prisoner in the custody of Hawkins.

"Into the boat with him!" roared the skipper. "Get him off my decks and out o' sight before there's murder done!"

"You'll send him ashore to the island?" asked Hawkins.

"Ay, that I will, by thunder! And let him thank his lucky star I don't send him to the bottom instead. But the island won't be no picnic for you, my son. There's water, and there's cocoanuts, and that's all you'll get. Ha, ha, ha! When I come again I'll look for your bones and bury 'em! Take the hound away!"

"'Arf a mo'," broke in the Cockney at this point. "I 'ope you understan', captain, if this 'ere's the gyme, I want to know where I come in?"

"You? Go to the——"

"I'd rarver go with my pal 'ere, if it's orl the syme," stated Bantry coolly. "You an' your ole boat an' the niggers—I've 'ad enough of it! It gives me the 'orrors, and so I tell you! I want to go——"

"Then go, and be durned to you for a lazy, swindling land-lubber!" roared the skipper, aiming a blow that sent the frail Cockney staggering. "Who's in the boat down there?"

"Jesty, sir!" came up the answer.

"Ah! Well, Hawkins, you take charge, and be sharp about it, for I'm going to have the anchor up. Look there, by thunder!"

He stared up as he spoke at the broad heavens, where the noontide sun was suddenly passing from view in a thickening film of grey vapour. The wind had sprung up, whistling in the shrouds, and suddenly the Lone Star gave a long roll.

Captain Chance was no fool, and it must have occurred to him that he was doing a rash thing in casting away two of the crew in the face of such sinister weather warnings. But mad rage had got the better of reason, and five minutes later he was standing by the rail, shouting curses after the victims of his wrath, as they were pulled swiftly for the lonely island that was to be their living grave perhaps.

Side by side on a middle thwart they sat, Tom Jesty facing them with an inscrutable countenance as he plied the oars, whilst in the stern sat Hawkins, looking none too pleased as he glanced up at the changing sky. As yet the sea was still smooth, but a sort of shuddering ripple darkened the surface now and then. Jesty, with a glance over his shoulder, selected his spot, and with a final lusty pull sent the boat grinding in upon the white beach.

Instantly a mob of birds rose with a great clamour from the heart of the island, whilst across the bare slope of sun-bleached coral a couple of land crabs raced for shelter.

"Now then," said Hawkins.

Quite calmly the two leapt to dry land, and there they stood for a few moments, looking first at each other and then up and down the lonely shore.

"It's the colour of dry bones," said Royden, thinking aloud.

"An' that's a fack," agreed the Cockney. "But the air's good—wot? My word, if anyfink wouldn't be good, after that floating 'ell!"

He shook a clenched fist towards the schooner, now showing signs of activity as she felt the breeze.

"Goo'-bye, ole Blackbird, an' w'en you git to Queensland I 'ope they'll 'ang you for a dirty pirate! Goo'-bye, Ginger," he added, turning to Hawkins in the open boat. "And you, ole man," facing Tom Jesty, who had sprung ashore and was standing by. "Shake hands, ole feller. You're the right sort, any'ow. Mr. Royden, sir, you'll say goo'-bye to Jesty?"

The young man came to himself with a start and took a step forward with outstretched hand. But Jesty waved him back.

"Bide a bit, my lads," he said, giving his belt a hitch. "Us don't part comp'ny yet awhile. If I say good-bye to anybody, it'll be to Mr. Hawkins here."

The mate leaned forward in the boat, his face suddenly working with mingled surprise and dismay.

"What's that you say, Tom Jesty? Don't you be a fool! Back to the ship!"

"Back to the ship yourself!" was the explosive answer. "You don't see me aboard the old pirate again! I'm done with the Lone Star, done with the dirty trade—done with Skipper Chance and the whole lot of you!"

"Tom Jesty, I give you ten seconds——"

"I give you less nor that!" laughed the sailor; and taking one plunging step he seized the boat's nose and thrust her clear of the beach.

Hawkins, who had looked like springing on shore to grapple with the deserter, dropped back on a thwart, and his face was black with fury as he slapped out the oars.

"Right you are, my man," he hissed, beginning to pull away. "We'll see what the skipper says!"

"Skipper'll say up anchor and away when he sees that!" cried Jesty, pointing a finger at dark patches of cloud which were mottling the hazy sky. "If he's short o' hands, let him fetch up the Kanakas. Ay, pull hard, man! There's ne'er a moment to waste."

Hawkins knew it well enough. As the three on the lonely beach stood and watched him, they saw his great back bending to the force of his rowing, whilst his face all the time was upturned to the threatening sky. Halfway to the ship he was in ruffled water that slapped about nastily. All around on the wide waste of ocean lines of white began to sear the sullen grey, and suddenly a great gust of wind came shrieking past, nearly sweeping the three off their feet, and causing a wild riot in the palms behind the beach.

Down came the rain, bursting upon them with such weight that it leapt up again in fine spray all about their feet. It was an extremity that banished from their minds all thought save that of shelter, and, with one accord, they turned and rushed up the strand, gasping with relief as they saw a rocky covering amongst the crashing palms.

Under a jutting ledge on the lee-side of this shelter the three huddled down with all the breath knocked out of them, whilst the whole island shrieked and roared with the fury of the tropic storm. Speech was well-nigh impossible, and when Royden turned to Jesty and expressed fears for the Lone Star, it was with plain gestures the seaman explained that the wind was mercifully in her favour, and would send her driving out to sea.

For an hour the rain fell in sheets from the inky heavens; and then, far more suddenly than the storm had come, there was a rending of the black clouds, the sun shone forth, and soon the island was steaming in the heat.

With the others at his heels, Royden darted between the tossing palms and cautiously looked out over the wide expanse of ocean; and there, already far away towards the horizon, was the vagrant schooner, careening heavily, and going down at every other moment amongst the foam-crested rollers as though never to rise again.

But, even as the castaways watched her rearing and staggering across the great green waters, something seemed to tell them that her time was not yet come, and that their own hazardous lives were still bound up—and fatally, perhaps—with the Lone Star.

—•—

CHAPTER II.

Tom Jesty Spells a Name.

It was the little Cockney who spoke first.

"Well," he said, "I'm 'ungry!"

Tom Jesty gave one of his rich, throaty chuckles, whilst Harry Royden, oppressed though he was by private cares of which his companions had no knowledge, turned to them with a quiet smile.

"That's the w'y, sir!" cried the Cockney. "I don't like to see you looking so dahn in the mouf!"

"Ay, ay!" chimed in Jesty. "Cheer up, m'lads! Here we are, and we're like to stop, for the island's off the track o' th' traders, and not even on the map. But things might be worse."

"For my part," answered Royden, "I want nothing better, and this is certainly a better fate than I deserve. But we won't talk about the past now. As for the future——" He drew a deep breath, and smiled again. "The future always looks brighter on a full stomach. Let's see what the island can offer us."

Round they swung accordingly, and tramped in a straight line for the heart of the isle, finding their own path through the tangled tropic vegetation. This tiny green spot of earth, one of thousands that lie scattered over the South Seas, was not entirely strange to the three castaways, for they had been ashore only yesterday to get water for the schooner. They knew that it was no more than two miles long by, perhaps, one and a half wide, rising a little in the centre, and that nowhere were they likely to find

traces of human occupation, unless it was some sun-bleached skeleton half overgrown with hungry creepers, serving to remind them of a fate which might be theirs ere long. But the sun was blazing down again, and there was a feast of colour on every hand, and the air was alive with gaily-plumaged birds and gorgeous butterflies; and all these things, coming so soon after narrow confinement on the dirty, foul-smelling schooner, with its awful human cargo, made their hearts beat with a glorious sense of freedom.

They were not to go hungry, either, for cocoanuts by the hundred had been brought down by the wind, and in a few minutes Bantry had broken the husk off one, and was munching freely, whilst the others shared a wild melon.

"Crickey," he said, as they sat around to take their fill, "I wonder what my young bruvver Alf would say to this? Used to take 'im to the cockshies when we lived at Peckham Rye, and we thought oursel's lucky to knock down one for fourpence. An' now jest look at 'em! 'E wouldn't believe it if I told 'im! I wonder," he added, turning to his companions, "if you know Peckham Rye?"

"It sounds like home, anyhow," said Royden, smiling.

"Home—eh?" added Jesty, drawing a brown hand across his sweating forehead. "My home is in the West, as th' song says, and little I'm ever likely to see it again—th' cottage half-way up from the harbour, with geraniums all over the roof, and the kiddies playing in the garden, an' th' missus at the tub. Yet there's no knowing. I've been under for a good many years now, and the luck may change again. I've seen such things, I tell you."

"You're all right, old sport," said the Cockney. "You were born for the sea, no doubt. Not like me, as left a desk in a timber-merchant's orfis, and borrowed muvver's last shilling to 'elp pay my passage out. Wot you call the prodigal son, I am, and that's nothing to be prahd of. Well, thank goo'ness, I did send the old gal twenty dollars when I was in San Francisco, and I'll make good yet, you see. Though this don't look like writing home, does it? My word, I do wonder wot my young bruvver Alf would say to this!"

Royden turned his face away for a moment.

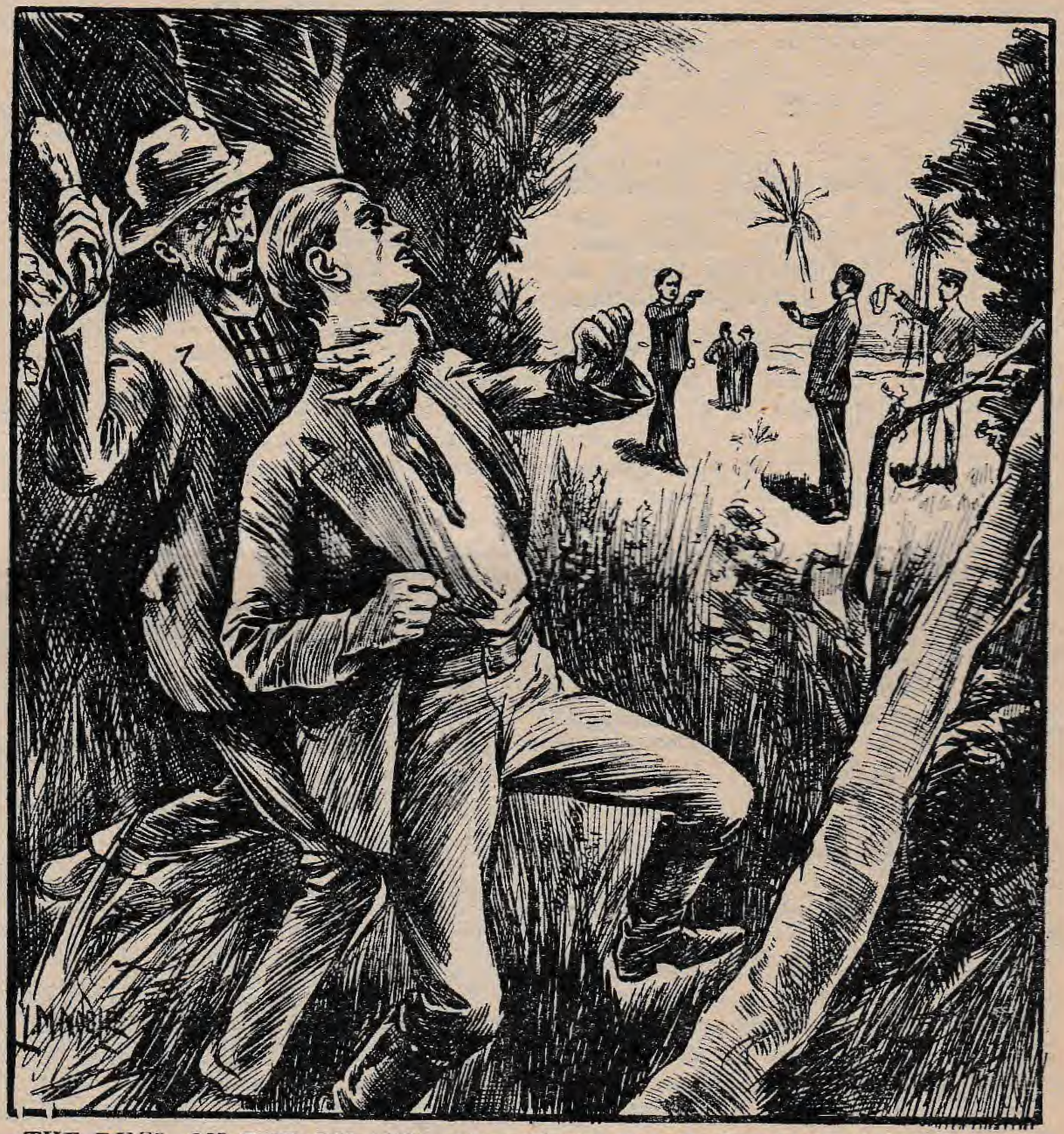
"Yours is a better tale to tell than mine, anyhow," he said, wincing. "I expect you can guess it, after what the captain said."

"Ay, ay, sir, I know," murmured Jesty. "There was a man I knew in the Navy; he told me things. And we're all flesh and blood——"

"I don't want you to find excuses for me," broke in the other, setting his teeth. "However low I may have sunk, I've never got as far as that. There's nothing to be said for me. The best education in the world, indulgent parents, the choice of my own career—and that's what it all came to! I struck my superior officer. What was even worse, I escaped to avoid arrest and imprisonment. It happened in Sydney, and by this and that I made my way up to Queensland, and there I fell in with the skipper of that floating hell. He told me he was going to trade amongst the islands for copra; and one thing I can swear to, if I'd had the least suspicion that he was nothing better than a slave-raider——"

"You'd have been orf it—eh?" said Bantry. "No need to tell us that," he added, nodding. "You're orl right! And, now, 'ow abaht a move?"

They rose, and roamed still further into the heart of the island; and perhaps it was a stronger sense of



THE DUEL ON THE ISLAND.—One of the many dramatic developments in next Tuesday's splendid instalment of "Rogues and Rovers."

companionship which caused them to hang a little closer together, glad to feel that, whatever perils lay ahead, whatever dark fate might be in store, they would stand or fall side by side.

Presently they came to the fresh water, lying in a rocky hollow amongst the waving palms, and here they drank from their cupped hands.

"I didn't want no picnic outfit," said Bantry, as they turned away; "but I do reckon the skipper might have given us a gun or two. Some'ow, that didn't seem like pl'ying the gyme, putting us ashore in just wot we stood up in. I've got a fag, if you've got matches?"

"Matches!" cried Royden, stopping dead in dismay.

He plunged a hand into a pocket of his shirt, and whipped out a box of safeties from which the paper covering had begun to peel. When he took out a match and rubbed it on the side, the head crumbled off.

"Soaked!" he announced grimly. "And now where's our fire to come from?"

Tom Jesty reached out for the box, emptied a few of the matches into his hand, and then stuck them in his hair.

"We'll see, sir," he said, "if you'll put the box back and let it dry in your pocket, about the fire——"

"It ought to be on the beach—eh?" said Bantry.

"Just where we were put ashore," assented Royden. "There's shelter under that ledge we found."

Some horrid fear of being unable to light a fire after all must have seized upon them, for next moment they were hurrying back in their own tracks, and Bantry for one made a rush when the beach broke into view. Here the ground was strewn in places with a dead, reedy grass that would soon be dry enough for a blaze, and, like a schoolboy in camp, he darted round, gathering up an armful. He was still busy with this task when Royden, who had mounted to the top of the strand in search of driftwood, gave a sharp cry:

"Here, Jesty, Bantry—quick!"

They were up the slope **in a**

moment, and now it was their turn to shout as they followed the direction of Royden's pointing arm.

"A ship!" roared Jesty, giving an excited hitch to his belt. "That's a steamer, m'lads—a yacht, I make her out to be!"

Bantry plumped down on his back and kicked up his heels.

"My word!" he chuckled. "If this ain't a bit of orl right! An' we might have stopped here for ever and ever! Amen!"

"Is she heading for the island?" asked Royden, with a sudden misgiving.

Tom Jesty screened his eyes with his great hand.

"Don't see what she should want here," he muttered, "unless it's water. But she's a yacht—one of them swell yachts as cruises round the world; I can make that out. And ye never know what they'll fancy doing."

Breathless with suspense, they watched the faint smudge of smoke, which was all an unpractised eye could have detected on the skyline. It grew no stronger, and slowly a look of baffled hope crept into the castaways' faces.

Were they to be passed by, after all—left to drag out a wretched, half-starved existence on this lonely island that had no place upon the map, with no shelter for their heads, no weapons—nothing save the clothes they stood up in? Days and weeks and months passing slowly away—years, perhaps—and the three of them still on the island, living the life of brute beasts almost! What a fate to be threatened with!

"No; she'll come!" cried Bantry, with sudden fierceness that betrayed his thoughts. "She must come! She's nearer already! Isn't she nearer, Jesty?"

"Maybe, m'lad," was the dubious answer. "I'm watching her all the time."

Royden drew out the box of matches.

"Come!" he said. "A fire will serve better than all the watching in the world. By the time we've got a blaze we shall be able to see if she's heading for us."

"Ay," said Jesty, "that's the way to talk!"

He drew the matches from his hair and handed them, with a grin, to Royden. They were quite dry and hard, and in a few minutes there was a crackling bonfire on the beach itself, sending up a great column of smoke into the clear air. Jesty made a fan of palm-leaves, and with this he waved the smoke so that it was broken up into separate clouds, which he caused to rise in batches of three.

"Another trick you didn't know—eh?" he chuckled. "That spells 'Help,' m'lads, and it ought to fetch 'em right enough. Useful thing to know, anyhow."

"She's nearer already!" cried Bantry. "Look there—you couldn't see her hull a minute ago! Oh, good! This is orl right!"

He tore off his linen jacket and waved it excitedly above his head. Royden, wrenching his gaze from the vessel, fetched more grass and dumped it on the fire.

"Ay, she's coming right enough!" declared Jesty presently, and he gave the fan a rest whilst he screened his eyes to peer out across the watery waste. "White and gold, o' course, and every bit o' brasswork shining like a guinea! Didn't I say she was a yacht?"

"What-ho!" chuckled the capering Bantry. "Fust-class passages 'ome for all of us! And ole man Chance—only fink 'ow pleased he'd be if he knew about this! Come on! Hi, hi! Hurry up! That's the way!"

Under full steam, the magnificent yacht was forging straight for the island, and every minute saw more of her lifted to view—rakish masts, and a spotless white funnel, gleaming brass rails, and snowy awnings, and at last her whole shapely hull, with a cutwater that clove the waves into fountains of foam, whilst all behind her stretched a crescent-shaped yeasty wake.

Soon the throb-throb of her engines came across the quiet sea, and Bantry, all this time waving his dirty jacket above his head, called to the others:

"I wonder 'oo she is?"

"I'll tell ye in a moment, m'lad," answered Jesty, straining his eyes to read the vessel's name. "She's the D-O-R-O—the Dorothy something; I can't make out the other word just yet."

A sharp gasp caused him to swing round and stare at Royden, who started forward and laid a hand upon the sailor's arm.

"What's that you said—that name! No, no!" cried the young man, with a look of sudden dread in his eyes. "You're not going to tell me that——"

"It's the Dorothy Dear," said Jesty, after another keen scrutiny of the vessel's name. "I've got it all now. The Dorothy Dear, of London."

"Good heavens!" cried Royden. "Oh, my heavens—the Dorothy!"

He reeled as though he had been struck, gave one wild glance to the oncoming yacht, and then passed a trembling hand before his eyes.

"That boat—and she's coming here!" he groaned aloud. "She'll have him aboard; he'll find me here like this! No; it mustn't happen—anything but that! Jesty—Bantry!"

"Ay, ay, m'lad, what is it?"

"Yes, wot's the trouble, ole man?"

Royden put them from him, drew a long breath, and then spoke in a hoarse whisper.

"I must hide," he panted. "There's somebody on that yacht I'd rather die than meet! I'd rather perish here alone than that he should know! Let them take you away, and never mind about me."

"But, lad!" cried the sailor. "You're forgetting——"

"No, don't stop me!" cried Royden, breaking from Jesty's gentle grasp. "It's the only way. Do your best for me. I'm going—I'm going away to hide!"

He sprang from them as he gave utterance to the fierce words, and, bounding down the landward slope of the beach, was lost to view in a few moments amongst the waving palms.

(Next Tuesday's thrilling long instalment is packed with exciting incidents, including the strange duel scene illustrated on the previous page. On no account fail to order your copy of "C.B.C." in advance, as our new serials always create extra demand for the paper.)

The Road-Makers.

A very favourite plan when making farm roads is to throw down a quantity of brushwood, and then to pile stones, brickbats, and rubble upon it. The brushwood ensures good drainage, and also a certain springiness. Railway engineers often use brushwood as a foundation for their tracks.

The Romans used blocks of solid stone as a foundation for their roads, and many highways made by the conquerors in Britain still exist.

Loudon McAdam, who gave us our modern system of road-making, flourished in the early part of the last century, and the first macadamised road was laid in 1818.

About the same time wooden pavements were tried in London, but steam-rollers were not used till 1868.

The system of tarring macadam roads is of very recent introduction, and is due to the advent of the motor-car.

Fish of Gold.

Have you ever paused to wonder whence come the bright little fish that flash their coats of gold in the globe which you consider one of your finest dining-room ornaments? China and Japan have long been the chief sources of the gold fish supply, but America is now doing her best to rival these older countries, and is producing over a million of these finny beauties each year.

Ponds where there is a constant supply of fresh water are used as goldfish lakeries, and it is, of course, impossible to breed them in any but a warm climate. The ponds are guarded by expert marksman, who shoot all the birds that come with the intention of preying on these delicate little fish.

How to Turn £75 into £800.

No shellfish on earth, or in the waters under the earth, is so prolific as the oyster, a single one of which can produce sixteen million young. If all these lived and produced in their turn, their number, by the time the fifth generation was reached, would be so prodigious—millions and millions—that they would make a bulk equal to more than 130 masses the size of this world.

Mussels, too, yield an enormous profit by reason of their prolificacy. Morecambe Bay was so overcrowded with these shellfish that they were of no value at all; but, at a cost of £50 many were removed to another part of the coast, where they could find plenty of food, and six months later they had doubled their size and value, with the result that the outlay of £50 yielded a profit of £500, and since then an annual expenditure of £75 has brought in about £800 a year profit.

The Yellow Terror.

Our Thrilling New Series of Complete Stories, Dealing with the Chinese Invasion of Our Homeland.

How China Fought the World!

A Tale of the Peril to Come.

Each of these thrilling stories is quite complete in itself.

Tell your chums about them!

No. 4.—A HERO AFTER ALL.

CHAPTER I.
The Bombardment of Birmington.

"Terrible fighting at Birmington! British driven from the town! Thousands killed!"

The disconcerting news was placarded over the whole of London—over the whole of the country. London was in a ferment; its millions of inhabitants were in a state of wild excitement and anxiety. The dreadful calamity which had befallen almost every Continental country was now becoming a reality in the British Isles.

The vast armies of the Chinese Empire, having already swept over Europe with devastating results, were now actually pouring into England. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese soldiers occupied Lincolnshire, Norfolk, and Suffolk; the yellow men were in possession of a powerful navy, and millions of men were on the Continent—only awaiting the word of Wang-Hi, the Chinese commander-in-chief, to swarm into England like a terrible plague of locusts.

Birmington, one of the largest manufacturing centres in the Midlands, was now actually in the hands of the yellow invaders. The explosion of a huge gun factory, followed by a gallant charge of the British soldiers, had resulted in a brief rout; but the Chinese had been almost immediately reinforced by a big division from Yeldburgh.

Before an hour had expired, the Chinese were in possession of the fine city, and by night not a single white man lived in Birmington. Thousands of British had retreated against overwhelming odds, but thousands more had paid the grim penalty of war in the brief but furious struggle.

Britain was a nation aroused; mobilisation was in progress in every town, village, and hamlet. Thousands of women and children were leaving for America by every available liner, for everyone realised that it was going to be a stupendous struggle—a struggle for supremacy between yellow heathens and white civilisation.

And two of the most talked-of persons in England were mere boys—Jimmy Harding and Steve Milford—a pair of gallant young heroes, who had escaped from the Chinese camp at Yeldburgh, and conveyed Wang-Hi's secret plans to General Sir Charles Penrose at Birmington, thus preventing the Chinese from seizing a precious store of rifles and ammunition.

To-day—a brilliant summer's day—presented an animated scene in the hilly country south of Birmington. A division of the British Army had arrived, and General Penrose had been placed in command. He lost no time in formulating plans for the defeat of the Chinese.

Since daybreak the soldiers had been working at fever-heat constructing trenches, and now they were almost completed. The Howitzer Brigade had been busy, and the guns were already mounted in their positions. So, too, were the heavy field quick-firers. The British position was fairly humming with activity, and General Penrose, from his headquarters, regarded the scene with a grim, satisfied smile.

"We have done well," he said, turning to Second-Lieutenant Munns, one of his aides-de-camp. "I think we shall drive the Chinese from Birmington. A taste of these big guns will be a surprise for the vermin, I imagine."

"You're right, sir," answered the subaltern cheerfully. "Ten minutes ago Major Wilson reported that the howitzers were in position, and the big artillery's just itching to start work. The entrenchments are complete, and ——"

"Excuse me, Munns," interrupted the general, "what are those two figures standing on that little knoll yonder?"

Second Lieutenant Munns gazed through his binoculars.

"Oh, they're those two youngsters, sir, who escaped from the Chinese at Yeldburgh!"

"I thought so," said Sir Charles. "Have them sent to me at once, please!"

The aide-de-camp saluted, and ten minutes later Jimmy Harding and Steve Milford were standing, rather nervously, in the general's tent, before the great man himself. He regarded his two visitors with a thoughtful expression upon his grave face.

"My boys," he said seriously, "I have heard a good deal about you—how you brought the first news of the Chinese invasion, how you took part in the North Sea battle, and how you escaped from the enemy at Yeldburgh. I am proud of you, for you have done as much for your country as any two lads possibly could have done. But I wish to tell you that, in remaining with us, you are running a very grave risk. These Chinese, in spite of their comparatively untrained condition, are so numerous that we may be overwhelmed. If you wish it, I will see that you are safely escorted to a place of safety——"

"Oh, sir," cried Jimmy, in dismay, "you're not going to send us away!"

"We want to stay, sir!" exclaimed Steve anxiously. "We want to be in the thick of it, sir!"

General Penrose smiled quietly.

"You really wish to remain with us?" he asked. "You wish to make yourselves useful in every way possible?"

"Yes, sir!" cried the two youngsters eagerly.

"I am glad to hear you say that, my lads," said the general quietly. "Indeed, I should have been very disappointed had you answered otherwise. But let me tell you that it is very unusual for boys to be on active service. In the present crisis, however, the proclamation has been issued that every able-bodied person over the age of fifteen must serve his country. You two have already proved your sterling

worth, and I am going to commission you as scouts, formally attached to my division. You will take your orders, and make your reports direct to me, or to any staff officer in my command."

"Oh, sir!" gasped Steve, in excited delight.

Jimmy's hazel-brown eyes danced with keen pleasure, and he blurted out some words of thanks. A few minutes later the two chums were in possession of an imposing-looking sheet each, with the Royal arms at the head. Then, in the presence of two witnesses, the boys took the oath, and became junior officers of his Majesty's Army, on active service.

It was the proudest moment of their lives, and they could scarcely believe their good fortune.

Then, while they were still talking to the general, Major Wilson rode up, and informed Sir Charles that everything was in readiness for the bombardment of Birmington. The trenches were completed, the guns in position, and the men anxious to strike a blow at the yellow invaders.

In less than twenty minutes the howitzers were roaring out their rain of death, and the huge field-guns were sending into Birmington a continuous hail of devastating shell-fire. The howitzer 50lb. shells—each containing 10lb. of lyddite—were doing terrible damage in the overcrowded city. The Chinese were packed in and about the town in hundreds of thousands, and every British shell accounted for scores. There was no escaping them; the buildings were struck and demolished in all directions, although the gunners endeavoured to deal death rather than destruction.

Jimmy and Steve, in the trenches, watched the bombardment with bated breath. Speaking was almost out of the question, for the continuous roar of the guns was almost deafening.

Through his field-glasses Jimmy could see the awful confusion which was being caused amongst the Chinese troops.

"In two hours they'll be thinned out to nothing!" he roared into Steve's ear. "There are a fearful amount of the beggars! But what can they do against this fire? They haven't any guns themselves, and they can't even send an answering shot. We're simply wiping 'em to bits!"

But Jimmy, in his enthusiasm, had not reckoned on the crafty, cunning nature of Wang-Hi, the Chinese supreme commander. The great man himself was in Birmington, and even while the British gunners were busy at their duty, Wang-Hi was giving quick, decisive orders to his hundred-and-one officers.

For Wang-Hi realised the weakness of his army in Birmington. There was not a single field-gun there, and only a limited supply of rifles. True, shiploads of artillery were on their way from the Continent, as well as countless other Chinese soldiers; but that did not alter the present position. Wang-Hi realised that unless something was done, and done immediately, his men would be wiped out by the thousand. The failure of his plan to capture the immense store of rifles and ammunition had ruined his whole course of action.

So, with wonderful calmness, he waited until the British guns were actually in position, and then acted. It was Wang-Hi's intention to capture those guns, and he had waited until the bombardment commenced so as to be certain of capturing the ammunition column at the same time. Before five hundred Chinese had been killed, the whole vast army, numbering fully 800,000 had received their orders.

Then, with cries of rage and defiance—with mad recklessness—the yellow men poured out of Birmington and its suburbs at the double, and advanced on the British position. It was an amazing spectacle. Right into the hail of bursting shell the Chinese came; but they were so terribly numerous that the swarms seemed in no way diminished by the thousands of dead and dying.

General Penrose clenched his teeth firmly when he learned the news, and stood watching the advance of the Chinese through his binoculars.

"Amazing!" he muttered. "Good heavens, the man in command of those forces must be a madman! The men are being mown down like chaff!"

But Wang-Hi was not mad. He had so many men at his command that the death of a few thousand made no difference. He had made up his mind to capture the British guns—and he would capture them at whatever cost.

On came the enemy, with the rain of shells bursting over their heads in a continuous shower. But they never wavered; they came on relentlessly, until the Maxims and Nordenfeldts commenced their shattering din. The whole front line of the Chinese simply collapsed, but those behind swept over their dead comrades with fiendish yells, and still advanced.

The slaughter was terrible. But the Chinese were upon the British now; the howitzers were useless at such short range. The enemy had suffered awful losses from the rifles and machine-guns, and the slopes towards Birmington were strewn with dead and dying. But, maddened by the lust for blood, they came on, and rolled in upon the British trenches in a solid mass of men.

Then came a charge of the infantry. With rifles flashing, with bayonets fixed, they attacked the Chinese. But it was like ramming into a solid wall. Despite their losses, the Chinese hordes overwhelmed the British. Yard by yard the gallant British soldiers were forced back, until the guns were surrounded by the enemy.

Jimmy and Steve watched the battle from the extreme end of the foremost trench, safe from the fight. With sinking hearts they realised that the British were giving way. How could it have been otherwise? They were outnumbered by eight to one.

"Isn't it awful, Steve?" groaned Jimmy dismally. "Who ever dreamed the Chinks would face that awful artillery fire? Why, they must have lost thousands and thousands! And yet there seems to be just as many of 'em as ever!"

"And these men here aren't a hundredth part of the whole Chinese Army," said Steve gloomily. "They're a mere handful by comparison. I—— By glory, look there!"

Steve pointed excitedly into the air, and Jimmy saw a monoplane descending swiftly, right into the battlefield. The boys could tell by the slowly-moving propeller that the engine was not working.

"Why, the chap must be dotty!" cried Jimmy. "Why on earth's he coming down there? Great Cæsar! I expect his engine's gone wrong, and he can't help himself! Ah, he's turning! He'll come down close to us!"

They watched the aeroplane with bated breath. It landed on the rough ground, bounded forward, and ran full tilt into the backs of a party of Chinese soldiers who were at the extreme edge of the fight.

"By pokers!" gasped Steve.

The aeroplane simply crumpled up, but its pilot was flung out clear, and landed, by a wonderful stroke of luck, on his feet. He gazed round him as though dazed, and saw that four of the Chinamen—the only yellow men in the immediate vicinity—had not been injured by the aeroplane.

For an instant the airman wrenched at his two revolvers. Then, just as the four unarmed Chinamen were rushing at him, he turned tail, and ran towards Jimmy and Steve at top speed.

Jimmy uttered a cry of amazement at this sudden display of cowardice.

A minute later the airman dropped, panting and pale, into the trench not fifty yards from where Jimmy and Steve stood. They ran along to him, and then Steve pointed grimly to the new-comer's uniform.

"The Royal Flying Corps!" he exclaimed. "He's a member of Britain's aerial defence, Jimmy, and afraid to use his revolvers against unarmed men! By gosh, what a coward! He's not worthy of wearing the King's uniform!"

CHAPTER II.

The Tables Turned—For His Country's Sake.

Captain Reginald Anderson, of the Royal Flying Corps, stood gazing abstractedly down upon the city of Birmington, and upon the myriads of Chinese soldiers in the nearer vicinity attending to their dead and wounded.

The battle was over! To General Penrose's amazement, the Chinese had suddenly retreated. But they had captured the artillery and the ammunition column, and had left the British without a single field-gun. Wang-Hi's object was accomplished, and he retreated before any more of his men were killed. For the British bayonets and swords had been creating terrible havoc among the comparatively unarmed Chinese, and although Wang-Hi could have routed the British by sheer numbers he preferred to retreat while he still possessed a large army. He knew that the white defenders would not give in until the last gasp.

So the Chinese retreated, after having suffered terrible losses. The British were by no means unscathed, for fully three thousand men had fallen in that grim, fiercely-fought battle.

And now that it was all over Captain Anderson thought of the words he had heard Steve Milford utter.

"Coward!"

The blood rushed to his temples, and he clenched his fists convulsively. He had reported the accident to his colonel, and had been told off to get something to eat, and rest. But he did neither. He wandered out of the trenches, and thought of the incident when he had fled from the Chinese.

"I was dazed," he told himself weakly. "I hardly realised what I was doing. And, after all, what business was it of those boys? They ought to be out of this. No, I'm wrong! They're the pair who escaped from Yeldburgh; who ran terrible risks to get word of Wang-Hi's plans. They were right in what they said. I am a coward! Heaven forgive me for that moment of weakness!"

Boom!

A puff of smoke made itself visible from a wood on the outskirts of Birmington, and a moment later a

howitzer shell burst with a roar a mile from the British trenches. The tables were turned now—the Chinese were bombarding the British! General Penrose gazed at the scene bitterly.

"What a situation!" he exclaimed to Major Wilson, who was by his side. "To be bombarded by our own guns! By heavens, if I could only think of a means to drive the vermin from the town! We are short of stores—terribly short, and Birmington is stocked with provisions! Are the Chinese to have them, Wilson?"

"It seems so, sir," replied the major gravely. "Until we are reinforced we are helpless. I understand that an army of Territorials and civilians are hastening here with all speed."

"Yes, yes, Wilson, but that does not alter the position," said Sir Charles. "The Chinese have captured our guns, and even if we cannot regain possession of them, we could at least destroy them. An aeroplane would have been useful, but Captain Anderson's machine is destroyed, I understand. No other machine—— Hallo! Look there, Wilson; what is that?"

"An aeroplane, sir, as I live!" ejaculated the major.

Coming swiftly from the southward could be seen the shape of a graceful monoplane. And General Penrose was not the only one who had noticed it. Captain Anderson, deeply immersed in his thoughts, had heard the familiar purr of the engine, and looked up sharply. He uttered an exclamation of satisfaction.

"Sanstead!" he muttered. "Staff-officer Sanstead, on the new 100-h.p. monoplane! By Jove, I wonder what's in the wind?"

He quickly unstrapped his field-glasses, and raised them to his eyes. So occupied was he in his observations that he did not notice that the air was becoming dangerously thick with flying shrapnel shell. The Chinese gunners were just getting the range, and the fields below the trenches were swept by the fire.

Captain Anderson stood on a little knoll two hundred yards from the foremost trench, and Jimmy and Steve, peering cautiously out of cover, saw the flying officer at the same moment.

"It's Anderson!" exclaimed Jimmy, in surprise. "What's he doing there? The Chinks are just getting the range, and he'll be hit if he doesn't move! If he knew he was in danger he'd skip into this trench in half a tick," he added contemptuously.

"He's watching that aeroplane," said Steve, gazing up for a second at the machine. "It's coming down on the other side of the hill, near the general's headquar—— Glory! Look at that!"

A shell had burst a short distance from Anderson, and he suddenly lowered his glasses. Then, realising his peril, he hastily turned, and came running towards the trenches. Jimmy gave a short laugh of disdain.

"Thought he'd hop when he knew where he was," he said.

"Give him a chance, Jimmy," said Steve protestingly. "I should jolly well run myself if I were out there! Look! The shells are coming like hail now!"

There was, indeed, a marked change. The dull boom of the guns sounded almost continuous now, and the shrapnel swept over the trenches in a deadly shower of lead. But the trenches were well-constructed, and by lying low the British soldiers were not in much danger.

Anderson ran onwards. Then, suddenly he tripped in a tuft of grass, and fell. As he was rising a shell screamed towards him, passed, and then burst with a terrible roar and a blaze of flame. The officer staggered to his feet, swayed for a second, and collapsed.

"By James!" cried Jimmy. "He's been hit!"

He jumped up, and stared out over the top of the trench. Anderson saw him, and waved his arm feebly. He even tried to rise, but fell back again. A captain of infantry hurried along the trench, and pulled Jimmy down with a jerk.

"You young ass!" he said sternly. "Do you want to be potted?"

"No, sir; but Captain Anderson, of the Royal Flying Corps, is lying out

Down sped the bomb, and next moment the great gas-holder blew up with a deafening roar. But the very force of the explosion wrecked the aeroplane overhead, and there was no escape for its heroic pilot. He had laid down his life for his country!

there, wounded," replied Jimmy quietly. "We can't leave him to die."

Then, without a word, Jimmy leapt upwards, and followed Steve, who had just left the trench. Next moment the two youngsters were racing towards Anderson, regardless of the flying shells.

The infantry officer turned pale.

"The young fools!" he muttered, biting his moustache. "They'll be killed before they can get back!"

The two boys reached Anderson, and lifted him up between them. Then they stumbled back to safety, amidst a rousing cheer from the soldiers in the distance, who could see everything. A shell screamed up, and passed, to burst harmlessly in a clump of trees. Then another came, but this one burst comparatively close. Jimmy felt a scorching pain on his left wrist, and knew that a shrapnel bullet had grazed him, and Steve's hat flew from his head, pierced through.

Two seconds later another shell burst right over the trench itself, and accounted for three men and a corporal, who had incautiously exposed themselves.

At last, after what seemed an age, Jimmy and Steve reached the trench, and they dropped into it, panting but unhurt. Anderson was conscious, and he smiled faintly at the boys.

"Jove, you're plucky!" he muttered. "I didn't deserve it."

"Quick, Steve!" said Jimmy sharply. "We must get him to the surgeon!"

Five minutes later Anderson was lying on the grass outside General Penrose's own tent, which was situated in a hollow, well out of the danger zone. The surgeon examined the wounded man, and bandaged a nasty wound in his chest.

"Is it serious?" asked Steve anxiously.

"Not if he is kept quiet, my boy," replied the surgeon. "An ugly wound, but not necessarily fatal. He must not move until all danger of internal bleeding is passed."

Anderson lay on the grass, pale and still. Jimmy and Steve, outside the general's tent, looked towards him pityingly.

Within the tent the general was holding a brisk conference with Colonel Jameson and Major Wilson.

"It is fortunate in the extreme that this aeroplane has arrived," the general was saying. "We have a stock of

terribly powerful bombs, and I intend to send the aeroplane over Birmington immediately. With these bombs the pilot can destroy the guns and probably cause a panic amongst the Chinese soldiers. If we can drive them out of the town and occupy it ourselves, I really think we could hold it until reinforcements arrived."

"It will probably mean death for the pilot, sir," said the major.

"Not necessarily. Good gracious, who is this coming up?"

The tent was open one side, and the general could see a man on horseback galloping towards headquarters at a reckless pace.

Sir Charles rose and passed out of the tent. The new-comer sprang from his horse and saluted.

"Well?" asked the general sharply.

"Staff-officer Sanstead just blown to bits, sir!" said the new-comer—a lieutenant. "He alighted in his aeroplane safely, and the machine is lying on the other side of the hill, unhurt. But while crossing an exposed space Sanstead was struck by a shell. It burst right upon him, sir, and he was simply smashed up!"

"How terrible!" exclaimed Sir Charles. "And now," he added to Colonel Jameson and Major Wilson, "our plan is doomed to failure, I fear. Sanstead is dead, and there is no other aeroplane pilot with us—at least, nobody except poor Anderson, and he is badly wounded. We have the machine, but no one to pilot it!"

Jimmy and his chum were standing by, and had heard all. They gazed at one another in dismay and horror.

Anderson, too, had heard, and his eyes flashed for a moment.

He had been called a coward! Now was the time to show that he was ready to serve his country, even though his very life-blood was oozing from him.

"Isn't it rotten, Steve?" said Jimmy glumly. "The general evidently meant to send the aeroplane over Birmington. My hat, it would have been splendid if the guns were busted up! But even if Anderson had been all right, I believe he would have funked——"

"Scott! Look there!" gasped Steve, staring.

For Captain Anderson had risen. A spasm of pain shot across his face, but he controlled himself instantly, and quietly walked across to the general's tent. His face was pale, deathly pale, but his jaw was set firmly. Next moment he was before Sir Charles, upright and at attention.

"What does this mean, Anderson?" exclaimed General Penrose, in amazement. "You are wounded, man! You——"

"I am ready to take up Sanstead's machine, sir," said Anderson quietly. "I am wounded, but it is nothing to speak of. I am quite capable of the work, sir."

His face twitched, and he uttered a short, hollow gasp. Then he was upright again, as before.

"You—you will pilot the machine, sir?" asked the general quickly.

"I am ready, sir," was all Anderson said.

"Bravo!" yelled Jimmy excitedly. "By James, he's a hero after all!"

Without a moment's delay General Penrose gave Anderson his orders, and fifteen minutes afterwards the wounded officer took his seat in the aeroplane and went off. Away soared the machine, and a roaring cheer went up from every throat to bid him godspeed.

Anderson smiled grimly as he heard it above the crackle of the engine, and his gaze rested upon the box of bombs which lay within his reach.

Jimmy and Steve watched the aeroplane's progress with anxious eyes. In fact, they half suspected that it would come crashing to the ground any moment, for Anderson was in such a condition that a collapse might come at any time.

"He's up all of five thousand feet now, I'll bet!" said Jimmy. "Look! There he goes, straight towards Birmington. By Jingo, it's a splendid effort! He's turned out a fine chap after all."

The shells still burst roaringly over the trenches, but the boys, in a place of safety, watched the aeroplane's flight with great eagerness. Straight on it went at a tremendous pace, a mere dot in the sky. Then suddenly the nose of the machine dipped, and the aeroplane sped downwards at a terrifying angle.

For an awful moment the onlookers thought that Anderson had failed; but as the machine righted itself and flew over the outskirts of the town at a comparatively low altitude, a huge cloud of smoke and dust arose.

Anderson had thrown his first bomb!

Through a field telescope Jimmy followed the aeroplane's progress. The captain flew almost recklessly low, but his speed was so great that he afforded a very poor mark, and he was able to throw his bombs with deadly accuracy. Gun after gun was blown to bits, and long before the last was destroyed the Chinese had deserted them.

In the British position the soldiers leapt out of the trenches, for the hail of shell had now been stopped, and gazed eagerly at the death-dealing aeroplane in the distance.

When every gun was destroyed, Anderson turned his machine and flew round the city in circles. Below him the Chinese were massed together in thousands, every street being crammed, showing a sea of yellow faces turned upwards in terror. In the thickest places Anderson dropped his bombs. They were of terribly explosive quality, and when they burst the Chinese were accounted for in vast numbers. In less than twenty minutes there were thousands strewn about the streets, while those still alive were rapidly getting into an uncontrollable panic.

General Penrose observed this, and sent out some brisk orders. Then, while Anderson was still intent upon his task, the British troops poured down the slopes and charged. The general reckoned that in their terrified condition the Chinese would not have an ounce of fight left in them.

With flushed face and gleaming eyes, Anderson flew over Birmington. He had one more bomb left, and he was searching for the best spot in which to hurl it. He looked down, and saw beneath him the gasworks. A gigantic gasholder, almost full, was on his right, and round it, in the neighbouring streets and open spaces, the Chinese were packed in great masses.

Anderson threw his bomb.

Down it sped. The next second there was a shattering explosion—an explosion which smashed almost every window in the whole city. The bomb had struck the gasholder, and the gas within it had exploded! The shock was terrifying in its intensity. Whole streets of houses rocked and fell crumbling to the ground, and the Chinese were struck down as though by some gigantic hand.

And the aeroplane, caught in the terrific air disturbance, rocked and swayed and pitched. In vain Anderson tried to control his stricken machine. Without warning a wing collapsed, and the aeroplane with its heroic pilot crashed to the ground and lay a shattered wreck.

Anderson had carried out his orders to the letter, and had given his life for his country. And the bravest man in the land could have done no more. He had vindicated his name, and died the death of a true hero.

And while he lay cold and still in his shattered machine, his comrades dashed upon Birmington with fierce cries and deadly determination. General Penrose's surmise had been correct; the Chinese, already terrified by the destruction of the guns, were utterly demoralised when that last awful explosion came.

The sight of the charging British troops was the last straw, and, with howls of terror, the yellow men fled. The rout was complete, and once more the city of Birmington was in the hands of the British. Once more the glorious old Union Jack waved proudly from a dozen flagstaffs.

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(Another grand "Yellow Terror" story next week.)

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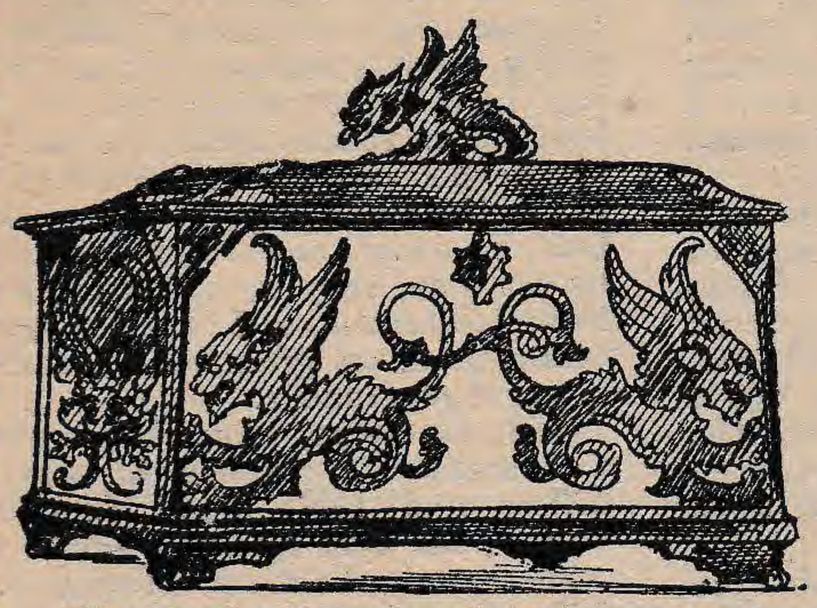

What is the Mystery of the Ivory Box?

By

Geoffrey Murray,

Author of "Jack Straight, Boxer," etc., etc.

THE STORY IN A NUTSHELL.

Left alone in the world by the death of his widowed mother, BOB MANLEY awakes one morning with the knowledge that in a few hours his little home at Riverport is to be sold by auction.

Bob has only the faintest recollection of his father, who died in Australia some time previously, under mysterious circumstances.

In the old home there is a small ivory box, which seems of no value in itself, yet when it is put up for sale by the auctioneer a stranger bids keenly for it, and hurries away with his purchase.

That night, when Bob is alone in the empty cottage, the seafaring man returns, and tells the lad that he was his father's friend in Australia, and he knows that the ivory box contained something of vital importance to Bob's future.

Bob and the sailor, whose name is TONY SILVER, set out to track the purchaser of the ivory box, and after many adventures they find themselves at Portsmouth.

Here Tony is captured by hirelings of the mysterious man, and Bob cannot find out what has become of him.

The boy follows up clues that take him to Rackwood Hall, a fine mansion in the country. Crouching by an open window, he sees the purchaser of the box, whose name is EDWARD MANDEVILLE, talking with LAWYER BASSET.

The two open the box, and from what Bob overhears he realises that it contains proofs of his being the rightful heir to Rackwood Hall, whilst Mandeville is only a usurper.

Bob is captured by his enemies, and taken to a boat on the marshes, on which Tony Silver is also a prisoner.

BUDD LARCOMBE, a man employed to act as gaoler suggests that the boat shall be sunk, so that the captives will disappear for ever, and he is ordered to carry out this plan by Basset.

(Now read this week's absorbing instalment.)

Adrift!

Silent, with a sardonic grin of triumph, Budd Larcombe gazed down upon his captives, his head crouched forward to clear the low beams of the eel-boat's cabin.

Bob watched him in wonder. As yet he only knew the man as the tool and hireling of his enemies. He had not learned the depths of black cruelty of which the scoundrel's heart was capable.

But Tony Silver had, and, as Bob turned his glance towards his friend, he saw again that terrible look in Tony's eyes which he had noticed at their first meeting.

Tony's face was set and immobile, but his eyes had narrowed; and, jet black though Bob knew them to be, they now burned with a glint of fury.

They were the eyes of a savage, and Bob almost shuddered as he saw them. Budd Larcombe, too, realised the menace in Silver's glance. His look changed, the smile died on his lips, and his brows drew down into a scowl.

He realised that Silver was burning for revenge for the ill-treatment he had received at his hands, and the realisation disconcerted him.

Budd had come to cut their bonds, conforming to his promise to Mandeville, and, indeed, to his own maturer judgment. For Budd himself now realised the risk, however faint, that discovery would entail if their corpses were found manacled.

By cutting their bonds, Budd, with some show of commiseration, had hoped to win their thanks, or even their friendship. Given this he might contrive to wheedle out of them some scraps of knowledge to arm him against Mandeville—some details which he could hold over Mandeville's head to enforce blackmail and secure himself against the possibility of a future confession by his cowardly accomplice.

One glance at Tony, however, showed him that such a scheme was foredoomed to failure. He must take another course.

"I've brought you food," he said abruptly—"food and water. You won't find me a stony-'earted gaoler," he added, with an uneasy laugh.

Silver did not reply for a moment, but eyed him silently. When he spoke it was in a low, tense voice that showed the relentless passion that held him.

"You dog!" he breathed softly. "You dog!"

"'Ere, no names!" flashed Budd. "You keep a civil tongue in your 'ead, or you'll starve!"

"You dog!" breathed Silver again. "Are you a man at all, I wonder? Will you untie my hands and let me get at you—weak as I am?"

Budd Larcombe laughed uneasily.

"Not likely!" he sneered. "I'm your gaoler, I am! No; it ain't no good tryin' to bribe me! I'm gettin' better paid for looking after you than you'll ever outbid."

"You crawling skunk! You could kick me in the head when your blackguardly crew had me down in the lane yonder. You could draw your red-hot iron bar across my shoulders, here in the cabin, to make me talk, when my hands and feet were tied. But you've too much fear for your dirty life to stand up to me with bare fingers, big as you are, you cur!"

Bob Manley shuddered in horror, and turned his wondering gaze on Tony. It was the first inkling he had had that the scoundrels had actually been torturing his friend in order to extract the truth from him.

Budd did not answer. With an angry scowl, he drew a parcel from his pocket and, opening it, displayed a loaf of bread, some hunks of meat, and a piece of lettuce. These he placed on the deck between the friends, while Tony eyed him with savage hatred.

Budd ignored his glance studiously. He looked carefully all round the cabin. His eye fell upon a short, straight bar of iron—the same with which he and the captain had tortured Tony—and he picked it up and, opening the door, pitched it out and over the side into the water.

Then he turned and stood hesitating a moment. He was thinking how to free the prisoner's limbs without risking an encounter with Tony. Not that he feared to pit his great strength against the sailor's weakness. But a scuffle just then would not fall in well with Budd's scheme of things.

He hauled a jar of water inside the cabin, and stood in the doorway, the rain beating past him, as if considering a moment.

"There you are," he said at last. "Now you can eat. You'll want a knife, though. Well, here's one. Don't try any tricks. You won't get out o' here in a hurry, and I sha'n't be far off, I can tell you."

He dropped a small penknife on the deck, and, turning, went out and closed the door quickly after him. The friends heard the lock turned and the heavy bolts shot home. Then the rubbing of the boat alongside, and then once, before the sound was drowned by the storm, the splash of oars.

Tony Silver lay back with a sigh.

"I'll be even with him yet!" he murmured softly.

But already Bob, his heart beating with excitement, was worming his way across the floor to the knife. He got it between his two bound hands, and crawled back to Tony's side with it. It took him several minutes to cut through the tight lashings, but at last he succeeded, and Tony opened his arms with a stiff, cramped gesture—free!

"Thank you, lad!" he said quietly.

Bob looked at him, and marvelled that he showed no more elation at his release.

"Tony," he cried—"Tony! Why, man, we'll be free in no time! Great heavens! Don't you see? He left us a knife!"

"Ay, lad," answered Tony, with a bitter laugh. "He left us a knife, but he took away the bar of iron. Curse his cunning eyes! I wanted that! It was our only chance!"

Bob Manley stared at him stupidly. He did not understand. Tony bent down and cut through the cords that held Bob's hands and feet. Then he severed those about his own ankles.

"Chafe them limbs o' yourn," he went on. "And eat a bite o' something, lad. We'll need strength by morning, maybe."

"But, Tony——"

"Ay, lad, you're thinking of escape, I know. But I've looked at them doors. They're teak, an inch and a half thick. The walls and roof the same. What could this toothpick of a penknife do against that?"

Bob Manley groaned aloud, and his heart sank.

"No, by hokey! They're not fools enough to give us a knife if they didn't know we was safe!" went on Tony angrily. "But the bar! I was hoping he'd have left that. We could have downed a couple of 'em when they came through the door in the morning. That's what I was hoping for!"

It was true enough, and Bob realised it in dismay. He had hoped that Budd's leaving of the knife was a stupid blunder. But he recognised that their goaler was far too cunning to commit so foolish a mistake. He had no inkling, of course, of Budd's real motive.

One glance at the walls and the roof and door of the cabin showed him that Tony was right. It would need an axe or a crowbar to break a way out of their prison.

But at least their hands and feet were free, and they had food. He turned to Tony with a quick gesture, but, before he could speak, suddenly a blinding flash illuminated the cracks and crannies in the walls, and, simultaneously, a deafening peal of thunder, far louder and nearer than anything yet, drowned his words.

And with the thunderclap the gale rushed upon them with a roar of driving hail and a shrill shriek. They felt the little eel-boat heel and shiver before the blast—felt the thunderous buffeting of the waves upon her sides as the waters of the creek, lashed into foam in the sudden squall, rose and surged down upon the little craft.

And now, while Bob sat wide-eyed in wonder, the rain drummed down upon the cabin-roof, and the thunder crashed and rolled in one continuous roar, drowning their voices in a wild medley of sound.

They braced themselves against the bulwarks, lying on the cabin floor as the craft rocked and surged, "snubbing" dizzily to her mooring-

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

Owing to the huge demand for "C.B.C." in all holiday resorts during the summer months, readers who are visiting the seaside are urged to secure their copies first thing every Tuesday morning.

rope, rolling and pitching, wallowing before the terrific gale that swept upon them in the path of the storm.

How long they lay and listened to the pandemonium of sounds Bob did not know.

But suddenly he saw Tony Silver's limbs stiffen; the sailor sat up, leaning forward, as if listening intently. Then he struggled to his knees and crawled across the floor to Bob's side.

"Bob," he cried excitedly, his lips to the boy's ear, almost shouting to make himself heard above the thunder-peals—"Bob, did you hear nothing? Don't you feel anything?"

Bob stared at him in surprise. Then suddenly he realised that, though the gale howled as loudly as ever, the eel-boat was no longer wallowing uneasily, pitching and jerking as she rolled.

"I heard it go!" cried Silver excitedly. "Boy, she's parted her moorings! We're adrift!"

"Adrift!"

In a flash Bob saw that Tony was right. No longer could they feel the sharp jerks as the eel-boat tugged at her rope. No longer could they hear the water thrashing against her sides. She floated, free, with an easy, heaving motion, gently rolling.

Bob scrambled to his feet and peered out through the tiny window in the side, not eight inches square.

A blinding flash of lightning lit up the wide waste of marsh and stream. Bob caught a glimpse of wildly waving rushes, bent and tossing before the wind; saw, as the boat spun round upon her keel, a broad sheet of water, far away, to which the creek opened, and realised that, borne by the current and driven by the gale, they were drifting helplessly towards it, and then the blackness shut down again with a deafening peal of thunder.

And, far away, crouching beneath a marshman's shelter of wattled willow and turf, Budd Larcombe waited, his eyes strained across the wide stretch of swamp before him.

For half an hour he had seen the eel-boat, lit up by intermittent lightning flashes, tugging at her moorings in the creek. For half an hour he had waited stoically.

And then at last there came a flash which showed the spot where the eel-boat had floated—empty.

"Ah!"

Budd Larcombe rose to his feet with a short, hard laugh. A moment he stood, squeezing water from his dripping garments. Then he stepped out into the storm, peering across the marsh. A second flash illuminated the waste for the fraction of a second.

"Gone," ejaculated Budd; "sooner than I expected, too! Well, so much the better. They'll have had time to cut their hands and feet free, and that's about all!"

He turned, and stumbled up the high bank, forcing his way through the hedge that topped it until he reached the road.

Then, with head held high, unconscious of the rain and wind that beat upon his face, he strode off in the direction of Rackwood Hall.

There was no pity in his heart. There was not one little pang of remorse, just as there was no tinge of fear.

He strode on, oblivious of the thunder and the gale that tossed the gaunt limbs of the trees high above him. His thoughts were not with the doomed men in the eel-boat. Already his heart was swelling with a fiendish exultation. Already, in his mind, he was plunging his fingers into the thousand pounds of blood-money; already he was scheming how to bleed his accomplice for more!

And as Budd Larcombe strode on through the storm, he laughed long and softly to himself.

A Fight for Dear Life.

Bob Manley awoke feeling icy cold. He opened his eyes and fixed them upon a broad fan of yellow sunlight that streamed in through the tiny window, wondering vaguely where he was.

It was some minutes before he

remembered. Both he and Silver had slept the deep sleep of utter physical exhaustion, and it was scarcely surprising that all Bob's faculties did not return to him simultaneously with the return of consciousness.

The pair had sunk to sleep beside each other, not even the crash and hubbub of the storm contriving to keep them awake. They had eaten the food provided for them, and Bob remembered that they had discussed their predicament in the drifting boat; and then Tony had fallen fast asleep, stretched on the deck.

The recollection stirred Bob, and he sat up, rubbing his eyes. To his astonishment the floor of the cabin was covered an inch deep in water, icy cold, that swirled lazily from side to side. It was the water that had chilled him, and he scrambled to his feet, and looked out through the tiny square of glass.

The storm had passed and the sun shone brightly.

The eel-boat had grounded upon a little spit of mud and sand, and, for as far as his eyes could see, there stretched a sheet of water, broken here and there with rush-grown islets, and backed in the distance, to his left, by the hilly ground of the shore.

To his right, the water spread broad to the open sea. Bob realised as he saw it that they had touched on the spit in the nick of time. Driven by the gale and the tide, had they missed it nothing could have saved them from being carried out to sea in the midst of the storm!

It was with something like a prayer of thankfulness that he bent and woke Tony. In a few words he told the sailor how they lay, and Tony sprang up and peered long and earnestly out of the window. Suddenly a sharp ejaculation broke from him.

"Odd!" he exclaimed, staring seaward. "See here, Bob. The tide's ebbing again; that means that while we've been sleeping the tide's been up and down again. Yet here we are, still aground."

"You mean we should have floated off at high water?" said Bob wonderingly.

"Sure! We came down with the last of the ebb. We grounded on this spit, praised be Providence for it! Well, now, why didn't we float off again at high tide and get swept out to sea?"

Bob shook his head. He had not the seaman's training which had already set Silver's quick brain to work to unravel this simple phenomenon. He stepped back, shivering as the icy chill of his wet clothing struck through to his bones.

The movement answered Tony's question.

"By gum!" cried the sailor, bringing his hand down upon the sill of the little window. "That's it, Bob! The water! Why, lad, look at our clothes! We've been lying in it all night; we're wet almost all over. The craft's sprung a leak!"

"Well?" said Bob doubtfully.

"Well! Can't you see? Look down at the deck. See, there! The water's been up in the night to about six inches deep. You can see the marks. What is it now? A bare inch. That means that it's drained away with the fall of the tide. That's why we didn't float off. As the tide rose, so the water rose and kept her fast. Bob Manley, there's a sort of Providence watchin' us! If we hadn't struck this yer spit we'd be dead meat at this moment at the bottom o' the creek! We'd have sunk like a stone, boy!"

Tony Silver spoke the last words with quiet solemnity, and as Bob looked into his eyes and realised the truth he felt a thrill of horror run through him at their peril. How near they had been to death while they slept! They had been saved as by a miracle.

Tony took another long look through the window.

"Yes," he said grimly; "but for this touch we'd ha' bin swept clean out to sea! It was the gale started the leak, I guess, or else made it worse."

"Do they know, d'you think?" asked Bob, as a thought struck him. Tony turned sharply. This aspect of their case had not occurred to him. But now his eyes lit up with sudden excitement.

"Do they know?" he cried. "By jimminy! I wonder? See here, it's as like as not they're searching for us over the marshes now."

"It's afternoon—must be past three o'clock, Tony. Surely they would have found us by now! A thing like this boat must be visible for miles on the marsh!"

"Ay, lad, you're right there," said Tony, drawing his brows down into a perplexed frown. "That's odd, too. That blackguard would be watching last night. He must have seen us break adrift, too."

"He wouldn't see much in the storm, remember. The lightning would show us to him one minute, the next we would be gone."

"By gum, that's it! Don't you see Bob? The blackguard saw we were gone—broken adrift, and let us go, the skunk! He knew we'd be swept out to sea, and it's my belief he knew the old tub was leaking. Oh, gee-hokey! And they're pattin' themselves on the back at this moment, thinkin' we're down wi' Davy Jones, drowned and done for. By gum, won't we surprise 'em!"

Tony chuckled grimly. He might or might not be right in his surmise. At any rate, the absence of any sign of a search seemed to show that their enemies regarded them as dead. Bob shuddered as he realised the meaning of Tony's quick deductions.

"But would they dare to let us drown under their eyes?" he said.

"Dare!" Tony turned upon him with a flash of anger. "Boy, they'll dare anything! See here, look what they did to me the other night, to make me talk, the blackguards!"

He ripped down his shirt, and, turning, exposed his back to Bob as he spoke. Bob saw a great livid weal stretching across the shoulder-blades, and a cry of horror broke from him.

"Ay, lad," said Tony. "Him they call Budd—'twas he that did it, with the iron bar. Wait till I get my fingers on him! Dare! What won't they dare? But we'll win yet! Lend a hand here."

He pulled on his shirt again, and crossed the cabin quickly, Bob following, his heart swelling with sympathy and anger at his friend's cruel suffering.

Tony dropped upon his knees on the deck, searching for some crack or cranny between the rotten planks. At last he got his fingers through, and tugged at a board, wincing as the weal upon his shoulders throbbed with the exertion.

Bob was quick to help him. Their long sleep had given them both renewed strength, and, as they pulled and tugged, suddenly the plank gave with a crack, and splintered crossways. Tony plunged his hand into the gap, and Bob watched him, mystified.

Tony saw the expression and laughed. His quick brain had been working even while they discussed their position, and resource had not failed him.

"It's the ballast I'm after, lad," he said simply. "If it's only shingle, we're done; but if it's pig-iron—— Ah!"

A cry of triumph broke from him, and the next instant he had hauled up a rough iron bar, some ten inches long and three thick, weighing perhaps four-and-twenty pounds.

"Pig!" cried Tony. "I guessed it. She's been a well-found craft in her time, I could see. No doubt they bought her for a mere song, pig-ballast and all. Here's another for you, boy! Now for those bolts and the lock!"

He sprang to his feet, passing Bob a second pig of iron, and the

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next moment he was hammering at the stout door where the lower bolt went home, driving the bar with crashing blows against the fastenings.

Bob fell to work upon the lock, his heart welling with admiration for his friend's ready wit.

"Euchred 'em, by hokey!" chuckled Tony. "He took the iron bar away, did he? He never thought o' the ballast! Comes o' not being a sailor, Bob! Ah!"

The bolt gave as he spoke amid a crash of splintering woodwork, and Tony stepped back and wiped the perspiration from his grim-set face.

It was only a momentary pause for breath, however. The fever of excitement gripped him, and passed with swift contagion to Bob's own pulses.

To break out of their prison—that was the one thing uppermost in their minds. Afterwards their course of action must remain to be thought out.

They flung themselves again upon the doors, the blows of the heavy pigs of wrought-iron thundering upon the lock and the upper-bolt as they drove them like sledge-hammers against the fastenings.

The upper bolt and the lock yielded simultaneously, and with a shout of triumph, Tony Silver flung the door wide and sprang out into the well of the little craft.

Bob was at his heels, and together the pair stood, drinking in the free air deep into their lungs, its sweetness trebled for them after their confinement in the evil-smelling cabin.

"Free," cried Bob—"free! Tony, old fellow, how can I ever thank you? I could never have thought of the ballast."

"Shucks!" laughed Tony delightedly. "You ain't a sailor, Bob, that's why. By hokey, it's good to be free again!"

He flung out his arms, and, turning seaward, sniffed the salt air, expanding his chest with deep, long inspirations. For a moment or two the pair stood thus, side by side, and it was Bob who broke the silence.

"What's to be done now, Tony?" he asked, relying with simple faith upon his friend's judgment.

"Done! I've been thinking, Bob," Tony turned to him eagerly as he spoke, his eyes lighting again with excitement. "See here, my plan's this. They don't know we're saved. They may or may not think we drifted out to sea and sank. That gives us our chance. We've got to keep them in ignorance. That's our move. We've got to work cunning, keeping under cover until we see what our course is."

"But, Tony, this old boat's sure to be found sooner or later," said Bob doubtfully. "They'll hear of it, and know we've got away. Then they'll be after us again."

"Found, will she? I guess not, boy! Tony silver ain't such a slouch as that!"

The sailor chuckled grimly, and Bob looked at him wondering what new resource had sprung to life in his ready brain.

"What will you do?" he asked.

"Do! Sink her!" answered Tony quietly. "Don't you see, boy? They'll never know what came of her, and they'll believe all the time we went to Davy Jones like rats in a sinking ship."

Bob Manley gasped, and his eyes lit as he realised the shrewd sense of Tony's words.

"But sink her!" he said. "How on earth are we to do it, Tony?"

For answer Tony kicked off his boots and socks, signing to Bob to do the same. Together the pair clambered over the gunwale, and dropped into the foot or so of water alongside.

Lightened of their weight, the eel-boat floated, and Tony was quick to seize his chance. Before Bob could quite realise it he had sent his lump of pig-iron ballast crashing against the rotten planks about her stern, smashing a splintered, yawning hole.

"Now!" he ordered sharply. "Your shoulder to her bows, Bob, and shove like blazes!"

Bob grasped his intention instantly. Together they shoved, putting all their strength into one tremendous heave. The eel-boat shot clear out into deep water, the ebbing tide caught her, and carried her, turning slowly on her keel, and the wind wafted her further and further from the shore.

(Another grand instalment next Tuesday.)

Fig. 1.

New Muscles For Old!

Our Novel Series of Physical Culture Exercises.

[*BEGIN THEM TO-DAY.*]

The two diagrams which accompany this article portray two different movements in one exercise. Before attempting this somewhat complicated movement, every boy who is following up this series of dumbbell exercises must have perfected himself in all the movements which have already been described for dumbbells.

Stand to attention, with the shoulders and head well back, the chest forward, the legs rigid, and the feet at right angles. Stamp the left foot, then stamp the right, and then charge into the position shown in Fig 1, and force the body into the position shown by the dotted lines in the same diagram five times. Return to the position of attention again, and repeat the exercise as many times as possible.

It must be remembered that in all the charges the leg left behind must be kept perfectly straight. There must be no motion in the shoulder joints, the chest must be pushed forward, and the shoulders must be well drawn back.

The second diagram illustrates an exercise which is practically a continuation of the last, and which, as soon as you have thoroughly mastered the first, may be performed in conjunction with it.

From the position of attention, stamp with the left foot and then with the right, charge into the position shown in Fig 2, and then sink into the position shown by the dotted lines of the second sketch five times. Then return to the first position, and repeat the exercise as many times as possible.

One of the finest exercises for increasing and strengthening the chest is the breathing exercise. It is absolutely essential to a healthy body that the lungs should be freely supplied with oxygen. The only way you can throw off the body's impurities, which consist largely of carbonic acid, is through the introduction of oxygen into the body, and the only way to get the blood properly purified is through deep, full respiration.

When you take a full breath you fill the lungs, and you can see and feel your chest expand. With each deep breath you send health to every artery, and keep the red blood corpuscles busy on their mission of carrying oxygen throughout the body.

The practice of deep breathing always develops the chest. It cannot fail if persisted in.

Every morning spend five minutes in filling the lungs with air, and exhaling it through the nostrils. Repeat the exercise at night.

(More exercises next week.)

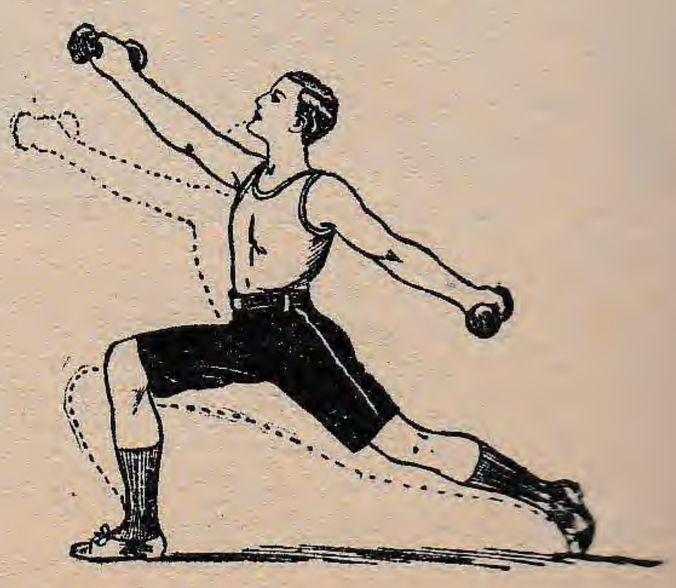


Fig. 2.

Quinthred's Quest;

Or,

A Schoolboy's Crossroads.

By Harry Huntingdon.

' To be a living lie—to pretend that I've no thought except for games and work, when all the time I am scheming to rob the place that shelters me! To make friends with fellows who will turn their backs on me, when they know what I really am!"

CHARACTERS IN THIS RIPPING SCHOOL SERIAL.

QUENTIN QUINTHRED, a new boy at Windlesthorpe Public School. Under the compulsion of a harsh and grasping father, Quinthred has been sent to Windlesthorpe to make secret search for a hidden treasure, for which purpose he has been provided with plans of some supposed underground passages. On his first day at the school the new boy discovers that

GAWLER, the cad of Windlesthorpe, and generally known as the "Rooshian," is in possession of duplicate plans of the passages. The Rooshian at once falls foul of Quinthred, who finds a loyal friend in

GALE, a fifth former, whose breezy ways have earned him the nickname of the "Hurricane."

Quinthred, hating the secret mission which has brought him to the school, wonders what Gale and all the other fellows would think of him, if they knew the task he is engaged upon.

After lights out on the first night the new boy creeps down to his study, where he suddenly discovers the Rooshian, with a bull's-eye lantern in one hand, examining the panelling of the wall.

It is evident that the cad has already gained some knowledge of a secret opening communicating with the underground passages.

(Now read on.)

CHAPTER VII.
Underground.

Quinthred choked back hurriedly the accusing words that rose to his lips as he saw Gawler at the secret opening in the study wall. The fellow evidently had not heard the opening of the door, and it seemed worth while to see what he would do.

"Ah, that's it!"

The Rooshian had found the secret spring, and the door in the panelling swung open.

Quinthred noiselessly lowered most of the things he carried—a powerful acetylene lamp was among them—to the floor, retaining only a ball of strong but thin twine. He had on rubber-soled shoes, and his intention now was to follow the rival adventurer unheard.

The opening was low, and to pass through the Rooshian had to stoop. Quinthred was across the room in three silent strides before he had pulled-to the door. Risking a nesty jam, he slipped his fingers inside. But Gawler had not meant to close the door fully; no doubt he feared being unable to open it again from the inside, and it only touched gently the intruding fingers.

Three seconds Quinthred waited, his heart beating fast. Then he pulled open the door, tied an end of the string to the leg of a chair hard by, and followed the Rooshian down the staircase, paying out the string all the time.

Progress was slow. Gawler's bulk very nearly filled the narrow space, and his shoulders brushed the wall at times.

Quinthred wondered what the fellow's feelings were. He evidently had his fair share of pluck, or he would not have gone alone on such an enterprise. The thought that he might lose himself in the subterranean passages evidently had not occurred to him. It was to guard against that, of course, that Quinthred had brought the ball of string, which he paid out as he went. But perhaps the Rooshian depended upon his plan of the passages.

As for Quinthred, a feeling of something like elation had seized upon him. The quest itself he hated; but to thwart the Rooshian in it was quite to his mind.

This feeling did not last long, As they descended, the cobwebbed and musty walls gave place to dank and streaming ones, and the smell was almost unbearable.

Quinthred knew that the smell meant danger. A naked candle is better than a closed lamp in such places. Where a candle will not burn a human life is not safe.

But probably the Rooshian did not know that. To return without warning him meant leaving him to very real peril. To warn him was to give away all the advantage hanging to his ignorance of the fact that he was followed. There remained one thing—to follow him and chance everything.

Quinthred followed.

The staircase had ceased now. Quinthred judged that they were fifty feet or more below the level of Old House's ground floor. The passage widened slightly, and the Rooshian's shoulders no longer touched its walls. Quinthred continued to pay out his twine.

Presently the Rooshian stopped. He had reached a place where the passage forked, and here he knelt, and setting his lantern down, held a paper close to it. Then he rose again, putting his hand to his head, and took the right-hand way.

Quinthred understood that gesture. His own head ached horribly; he could feel the throbbing of the veins in his temples; and the foul smell almost choked him.

But the Rooshian held on, and Quentin held on in his wake.

The ball of string was getting very small. As he paid it out Quinthred wondered for what spot the bully was making.

Could it be that the supposed buried treasure was not, after all, the object of his quest?

The Rooshian gasped loudly, and staggered against the wall, and his watcher feared that he was about to faint. A pretty business that would be! They were at least two hundred yards from their starting-point now, and the poisonous atmosphere extended practically all the way. To drag the bully that distance

would be almost impossible; to carry him would be quite so; to go for help meant leaving him to die; and to stay with him meant dying with him.

But Gawler did not faint. He pulled himself together, and moved on, staggering. Quinthred staggered too; but it seemed to him that since they had passed the place where the Rooshian had halted the air had grown distinctly less heavy and putrid. The passage now had a slight upward slope too. Were they nearing an outlet?

Again Gawler halted. He had

Gawler gave a shriek that sounded almost as horrible as the sound which had frightened him. Next moment he charged full into Quinthred, and the two rolled together on the floor of the passage.

come to another parting of the ways —a triple parting this time.

After consultation with his plan, he took the middle one. This was much wider than those thus far traversed, and Quinthred noted that here and there were grooves in the wall, much like the man-holes in a tunnel, but less regular in shape.

The light of Gawler's lantern fell on the floor ahead of him, and he showed a black, huge lump against it. It was the light rather than the figure which Quinthred followed.

Suddenly the light shifted round. The bully was turning back.

Quinthred was close to one of the cavities in the wall. He slipped into it, and Gawler passed without seeing him, holding the lantern in front of him.

The Rooshian's sallow countenance had turned almost purple, and his lips were drawn back from his teeth so that he looked like a snarling animal.

Hang the fellow! Had he reached the tether of his courage? No, it was not that. Brutal bully though he was, Gawler had plenty of pluck. This midnight exploration of his showed up that quality in no small measure. Many a man who might have fronted death bravely in daylight and fresh air would have shied at this.

He had made up his mind, it seemed, that the middle passage was the wrong one, for on reaching again the place where it began he chose the left-hand opening. Quinthred followed, of course.

Twenty yards or so the Rooshian had gone, and Quinthred was about five yards behind him.

Both halted, as if by mutual consent. To their ears had come a horrible wailing sound.

Quinthred was alarmed; Gawler was absolutely terrified. This was where his courage failed. He had braced himself against danger and loneliness, foul air, and the risk of getting lost; but he had ignored the supernatural, and when that sound smote his ears his pluck gave way.

He stood for a moment like one petrified. Then he dropped his lantern, and gave a shriek that sounded almost as horrible as the sound which had frightened him.

Next moment he charged full into Quinthred, and the two rolled together on the floor of the passage. Gawler had gripped the other fellow's throat desperately, and it was all that Quinthred could do to drag himself free.

So frantically did the frightened bully plunge and struggle that the only course open to Quinthred was to reveal his identity, and quiet him by the knowledge that his antagonist was a schoolfellow, even if an enemy, and not some dreadful denizen of this subterranean region.

CHAPTER VIII.
In the Darkness.

"Get up, you idiot!"

"Eh?"

The Rooshian dimly recognised that voice, but could not believe his ears.

Before Quinthred could say more there came another sound—sharp, short, the bark of a dog, as it seemed to him. And that long wail might have been a dog's howl surely.

"What's that?" mumbled the bully, trembling in the darkness.

"I don't know," replied Quinthred. He didn't know, and he had no intention of saying what he guessed it to be.

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"Quinthred; you know that well enough."

"I thought so. But I didn't know. I can't make out how you came here. What's that?"

"That" was to Quinthred's ears unmistakably a human voice—someone calling to the dog. But he did not say so.

"Same as the others, I guess," he replied coolly. "This is a queer place, Gawler!"

"It is. I want to get out of it," the Rooshian answered, almost meekly.

"Best thing you can do, I should say. Silly trick, coming here."

"Hanged if I'm sure of the way, though!"

"Better ask the ghost," returned Quinthred. He and Gawler had got to their feet, but the Rooshian took care to keep fast hold of his enemy's arm.

"Do you think it is a ghost?"

The bully's teeth were chattering. Here was the weak spot in his armour. Once the idea of a spook had entered his mind, he could not get rid of it, could not regain his courage.

"What else can it be? And what's likelier than that some of the old monks should walk?"

"I say, Quinthred, this is particularly beastly! I've dropped my lantern, you know, and the thing's gone out, and I don't believe I've a match."

"I have," Quinthred answered, and he went to grope for the lantern, Gawler going with him, because he dared not stay behind.

But when the thing was recovered, Quinthred found that after all he had no match. He must have pulled the box out of his pocket with the ball of string, and it had fallen without his hearing it.

No further sound of either man or dog had come; and Gawler was beginning to lose some of his fear. But now a new dread assailed him.

"How are we going to get back?" he asked. "It's as black as a nigger down here. Fifty to one we miss our way!"

"I can find it," Quinthred answered positively.

He had dropped the small ball of twine still left him, but he knew it must be lying not far away.

He groped for it in the black darkness.

"What are you doing?" demanded Gawler.

"Oh, mind your own business!" retorted Quinthred, whose temper was a bit on edge.

"It is my business! I believe you're trying to do a bolt and leave me!"

"Believe what you choose! It's no odds to me! For the matter of that, I haven't accepted any contract to get you out of here. I don't care a hang if you never get out!"

Silence fell upon that statement. Gawler scarcely knew what to say.

Into the silence struck a sound—a voice far away. Then came another long-drawn, howling wail.

"It is a ghost!" burbled the Rooshian.

Quinthred did not reply, but it was on the tip of his tongue to say that the ghost must be Irish, and with a dog in its company; for his ears were far sharper than Gawler's, and he had caught something that sounded like:

"Och, come on wid ye, ye spalpeen!"

Gawler's presence and the absence of a light kept him from investigating; but, naturally, he was not without a good deal of curiosity as to what this might mean. He had found the ball of string now, however, and the best course for them seemed getting back without delay.

"Catch hold of my coat," he said.

"All right," replied Gawler, and clutched it in a grip that showed he had no intention of risking his companion's getting too far ahead.

Quinthred's ears caught the sound of pattering feet. Gawler heard nothing. The other fellow learned later on that the Rooshian's hearing was somewhat defective — which, perhaps, accounted for his roaring voice.

"Oh, something's bitten me!"

Something rubbed against Quinthred's legs. He put down his hand, and felt the rough head of a dog.

A warm tongue licked his hand. The dog evidently distinguished between him and Gawler. It had bitten the bully; it wanted to make friends with him. Quinthred laughed.

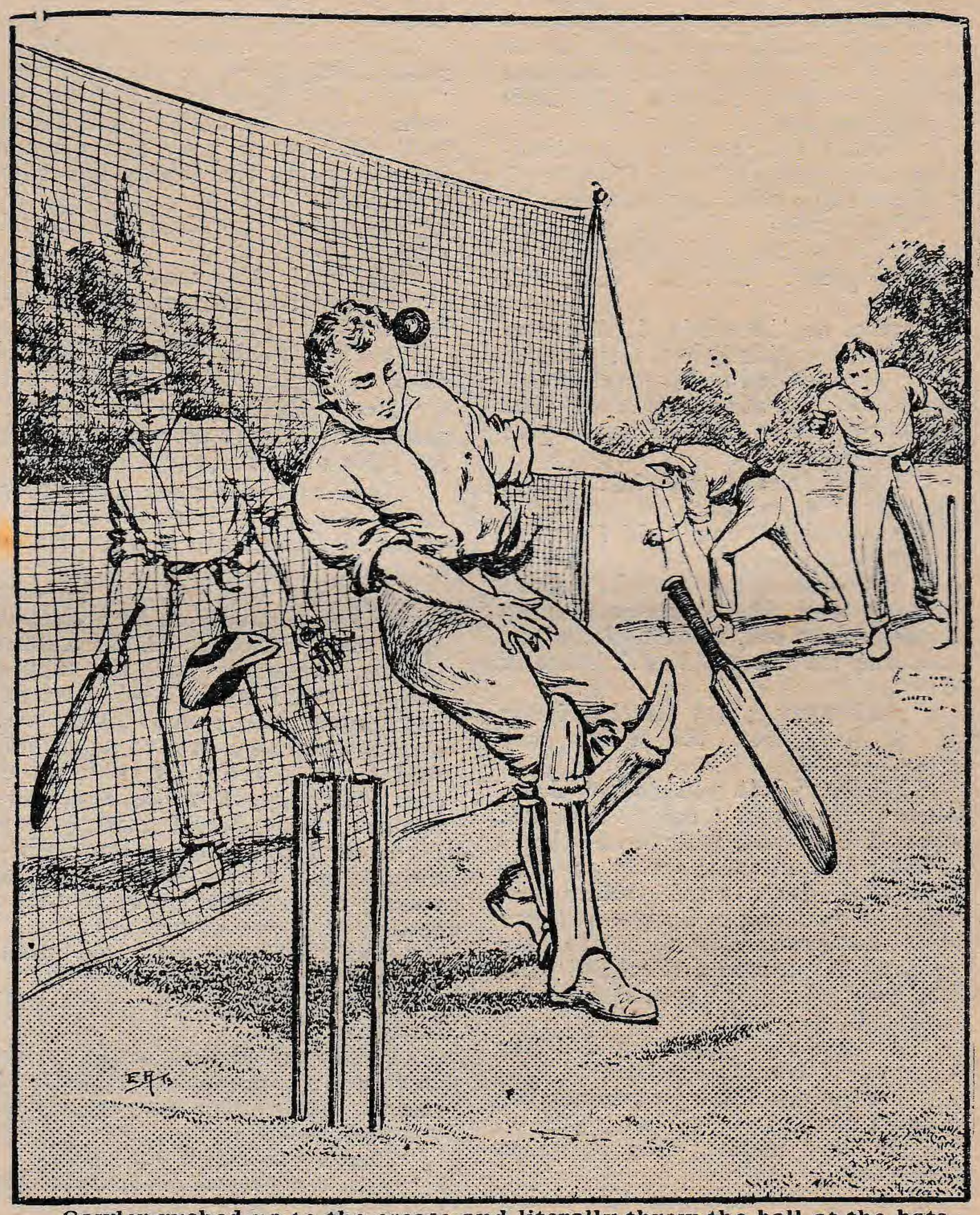
"What are you cackling at, you idiot?" blared out the bully. "Something bit me, I tell you!"

"Rummy ghosts they have round these parts!" was Quinthred's reply.

The dog was no longer there. Quinthred stopped, and strained his ears for any sound of its going or any token of its master's near presence, but he could hear nothing.

"What are you stopping for?"

"I shall stop when I like, and go on when I choose! I didn't ask for your company, and I don't in the least want it!" was the reply.



Gawler rushed up to the crease and literally threw the ball at the batsman's head. The ball took Quinthred on the left temple, and he dropped to the ground like one shot.

"I say, Quinthred, be decent! We're in a nasty hole, it seems to me, and it's not a bit of good squabbling."

"Shut up, then! I can stand you if you don't talk, I dare say!"

The bully lapsed into silence. Quinthred led on again, feeling his way by the string. He had to be careful, for he recognised the fact that it would be uncommonly awkward if the string should break; and, moreover, he had no notion of letting the Rooshian know how it came about that he was sure of his way.

A few minutes passed in laborious progress. No further sound of man or dog came to Quinthred's ears. They were now in the thick of the bad air.

"Are you sure you're right?" asked Gawler anxiously.

"Do you want to lead?" snapped Quinthred.

The blood drummed in his temples; the top of his head felt as if it were being lifted off, and the Rooshian's clutch of his coat had become a nuisance almost unbearable.

Now they came to the narrowest part of the passage, and Gawler stumbled continually against one wall or another.

"I believe you're right," he muttered. "This seems like——"

"Oh, shut up, do!" Quinthred returned irritably.

He had disliked the Rooshian very heartily before; from now on, he felt, he would loathe him absolutely. That companionship in the black darkness might well have drawn together two fellows in whom was any capacity for mutual liking. But these two were altogether too far apart.

Just as Quinthred began to feel

that another minute of it would be more than he could bear, he found himself at the top of the staircase, pushed open the secret door, and fairly fell into the study.

Gawler, following, stumbled over him.

There they lay for a few moments without word or movement, both near to exhaustion. Then the Rooshian, who had not the disadvantage of a heavy body across him, struggled up, and flung open the window-sash.

The fresh air of night flowed into the room, and Quinthred drew deep breaths of it, and felt better.

He got up. After the absolute blackness of the passages, the darkness here seemed only dusk. In it Gawler and he looked at one another's faces, curious pale blurs in the dimness.

"I won't ask you for an explanation now, Gawler," said Quinthred. "We'll leave that for to-morrow."

"Explanation! I jolly well like that! How did you come to be following me? Tell me that, will you?"

Really, on the whole, it did seem that the Rooshian had as much claim to an explanation as his rival adventurer. It was almost as likely that he would get as that he would give one, however.

"You're very grateful!" said Quinthred scornfully.

"Grateful! Why should I be ?"

"A decent fellow——"

"A decent fellow wouldn't make a song and dance about helping another chap out, when he knew the way and the other didn't!" broke in Gawler.

"Perhaps not; but I rather fancy if it had been the other way round——"

"I'd have left you to rot down there? By jingo, I believe I would, too! I hate you, Quinthred—that's a fact; and, as there aren't any witnesses, I don't mind telling you that, if you dog me again—if you don't keep your ugly nose out of my affairs—I'll do you a mischief! And I'll take jolly good care it can't be traced to me, too!"

"After that, I think you'd better clear out!" said Quinthred.

"I'm going. But just remember what I say!"

And next moment the Rooshian had gone.

Stooping to unfasten the string that had proved so useful, Quinthred was seized by sudden nausea and giddiness. He could scarcely crawl up to bed.

Taking it altogether, the quest had scarcely started well.

CHAPTER IX.

At the Nets.

Whybrow looked in just after morning classes next day.

"You're a cricketer, I suppose, Quinthred?" he said.

"Yes."

"Bat?"

"Oh, decent, I suppose!"

Quinthred's last season's average had been well over forty. He had grown accustomed to carrying a team on his shoulders, so to speak. But Windlesthorpe cricket was doubtless of higher class than that of his old school, and he did not care to open his mouth too widely.

"Bowler?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Pace?"

"Fastish."

"Do you mean fast-medium, or really fast?"

"Well, I think I may say really fast. Above fast-medium, anyhow."

"That's good! We want a bowler of pace. Perhaps you're the very man."

"There's the Rooshian," put in Gale.

"There is Gawler, certainly," replied Whybrow, in his cool way. "But I shouldn't mind lighting on something a bit better than he is. Will you get on your flannels and come down to the twenty-two nets, Quinthred?"

"Me, too?" inquired the Hurricane.

"Oh, yes! You may scrape into the twenty-two this season, though I doubt it."

Whybrow went. The two hurried off to change.

"I've something up my sleeve," remarked Gale, fumbling in getting his shirt over his head.

"You can't get your arm there, unless you go to work differently," returned Quinthred. "Here, let me help you. There you are."

"Whybrow thinks I'm a bit of a duffer and a good deal of a slacker. He's wrong, though. I did slack a bit last summer, but I'm not a duffer. And I put in a lot of cricket last summer hols.; was staying with a chap who had a pro. to coach him. And I really believe I came on no end. Anyway, I made a century against pretty decent bowling, and I'd never topped fifty before. Whybrow thinks I may scrape into the twenty-two, but I'm going to have a shot for the eleven, you bet!"

"Good luck to you, old man! Think I shall have a chance?"

"You? Why, you'll simply walk in, Quint!"

As they passed their study on the way down Quinthred halted. A curious gurgling noise came from the next room.

"That's Gawler's?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Gale, who had not heard. "But I say——"

Quinthred had pushed the door open before he could finish his protest.

On the hearthrug lay little Sharp. His legs were tied together, his heels trussed up almost to the back of his thighs, and his wrists fastened to his knees. Moreover, he was roughly gagged, and the sound Quinthred had caught as he passed was due to his trying under this disadvantage to make himself heard in an appeal for help.

Quinthred cut the bonds at once.

"Poor little beggar!" said the Hurricane, as Sharp, his pale face reddened by his struggles with the gag, lay gasping.

"I needn't ask who did this," said Quinthred.

"You needn't," returned Gale. "I don't suppose, for that matter, the kid would tell you if you did."

"Oh, yes, he would; don't you make any mistake about that! You're not to fag for Gawler any more, young 'un—do you hear?"

"I say, Quinthred, he'll be on to me worse than ever!"

"Keep out of his way. I'll attend to him if necessary."

"You can't, you know, Quint—it's only Whybrow or the Flamingo who——"

"I can! If necessary, I'll speak to Whybrow or Mr. Flamank. I'm not going to have kids tortured next door to us."

"What's that?" roared Gawler.

"I think you heard," replied Quinthred coolly. "Sharp isn't to fag for you again."

"Who says so?"

"I say so."

"What, have they made you house captain already? I hadn't heard of Whybrow's resigning."

"Cut, kid," said Quinthred kindly. "Touch him if you dare!" he added, as the bully stretched out a big hand; and his voice rang out like a trumpet's challenge to battle then, and somehow the Rooshian let little Sharp slip past him.

"This sort of thing can't be done," said Gawler lamely.

"No. I'll see that it isn't," Quinthred replied, wilfully misunderstanding him. "Come along, Gale. This specimen knows how things stand now."

Gawler was also in flannels, but he did not at once follow them to the playing-fields.

"You fellows have been some time," remarked Whybrow, who was batting in one of the nets. "Send me down a few, will you, Quinthred?"

The first ball the new fellow sent down fairly opened the eyes of Windlesthorpe or such of Windlesthorpe as saw it.

Very fast, and pitching a perfect length, it came in a little from the off, and flicked away the bails.

"My word!" murmured Marne.

It was something of a feat to get past Whybrow's defence, even at the nets, for he took his practice seriously; but that ball might have bowled anybody.

No mere fluke, either! Quinthred had the ability to pitch a length, which is lacking in so many would-be fast bowlers; his action was perfect, and the inch or two of break was far more effective than a bigger break on a slower ball could have been.

"That puts the Rooshian's nose out of joint," remarked Dunn.

"Oh, the Rooshian!" said Hollis-Browne contemptuously. "He never was a bowler. To my mind, his action's a chuck, pure and simple; he can't keep—no, he can't get—a length——"

"And he bowled you twice for a duck in the Form match last year, old man," put in Browne secundus.

Now Gawler came up. He had few

friends there; but there were two or three of his type, and one of these hastened to enlighten him—not only as to what had happened, but as to what had been said. His scowl showed plainly the view he took of matters.

"What are you doing here? You're not in the twenty-two list," he said suddenly, turning to Gale.

It was meant as a flank attack upon Quinthred, no doubt. But Quinthred was not to be drawn. He merely smiled, and left the Hurricane to speak for himself.

"True, O prophet!" answered Gale. "I am not in the list, because it hasn't been made out yet. May I beg for your gracious permission to practise with the twenty-two? I may mention that I already have Whybrow's."

There was a roar of laughter at that. Gale was putting on pads now. The bully gritted his teeth fiercely.

"I don't know what Whybrow thinks, but I should say the junior nets are about your form," he snarled.

"Maybe—maybe not. Anyway, I don't believe you can bowl me," answered Gale blithely.

He walked into a vacant net, and the Rooshian snatched up a ball.

Few there would have been surprised if Gale's wicket had fallen to the first straight one; and Gawler did get a straight one in at times, and at a rare pace, too.

Watching him, Quinthred decided that he did not actually throw. His delivery was a peculiar one, but not, to the new fellow's thinking, unfair.

The rest were watching Gale. He had not exaggerated the improvement made in his play during the last holidays. A fellow who has cricket in him, as Gale had, may come on a lot in a very short time. The Hurricane had taken advantage of a fair and dry April, too, and had put in some useful practice at home.

"When did you learn to cut, Hurricane?" asked Hollis-Browne.

"Last week," replied Gale gravely.

"Talk about a bushel!" said Marne.

"Nobody did," answered Browne secundus.

"Ass! He means the Hurricane's keeping this dark," his elder brother said.

"Then he should say so. I'm not nuts on parables and poems."

"Aren't you going to bowl to him, Quinthred?" inquired Whybrow.

"Three are enough, I fancy," was the answer.

"Oh, if that's all," said Browne primus, and chucked the new fellow the ball.

But even against his chum Gale shaped well, and Quinthred was not only the best bowler he had to meet, but had the additional difficulty of being quite new to him.

"You're booked for the twenty-two, Gale," said Whybrow, at the end of a ten-minute spell, during which the Hurricane had only once been bowled.

"Why don't you say the eleven, skipper?" asked Hollis-Browne, and Gale flushed, and for once found no words, while Whybrow smiled.

"Your turn, Quinthred," said the captain.

Everyone was anxious to see what the new fellow could do. If he was as good a bat as bowler, Whybrow would have a serious rival for the honour of being Windlesthorpe's best all-rounder.

And he could bat, there was no mistaking that. Very upright in stance, very straight of bat, stylish, powerful, versatile, he met all the bowlers who attacked him easily and confidently. His drives were all along the carpet; his cuts travelled like greased lightning; he dealt in masterly fashion with the bumpy ones, and hooked the short ones hard and with certainty.

He was especially severe on the Rooshian, whose temper was making his bowling worse than usual. Some of the balls he sent down did not pitch halfway, and these Quinthred treated with the contempt they deserved.

Not a ball within inches of being straight got past him, and he seemed to be able to score freely off all kinds of bowling, with a special partiality for the Rooshian's short-pitched stuff, and the Hurricane's weird attempts at the googly.

The twenty-two nets were on the edge of Big Field, and along the hedge behind them ran a path leading over the moor. Quinthred's sharp ears caught the sound of a voice that struck a chord in his memory.

"Arrah now, ye baste, come out of it, will ye?" it said.

The batsman turned, and saw the shaggy head of a rough Irish terrier thrust through the hedge. A dog—and that voice! Surely——

A nasty thud sounded. A full-pitch had struck him just over the heart.

"Idiot! Couldn't you see he'd turned his head away?" snapped Marne.

"I didn't," answered Dunn. "I say, Quinthred, I'm frightfully sorry, really!"

"It's all right," Quinthred replied, stooping to pick up his bat. For the moment he had felt like fainting; but the feeling passed to some extent.

"Had you better go on?" asked Whybrow.

"I'll finish my spell," was the reply. "I'm all right."

He was not quite all right. A slow from Gale lowered his leg stump, and the next ball sent down was put up feebly in the air. While it had not yet descended, Gawler rushed up to the crease, and literally threw his ball at the batsman's head!

Up went Quinthred's bat to shield his face. But his customary quickness had deserted him. He was too late.

The ball took him full on the left temple, and he dropped to the ground like one shot!

(To be continued next Tuesday.)

AFTER YOU HAVE LAUGHED OVER THESE LITTLE STORIES, PASS THEM ON TO YOUR FRIENDS.

On the Instalment System.

They were experts in many things, but chiefly in the art of bragging. And at the moment they were discussing their own wonderful feats as vocalists.

"Why," said the American, blowing rings of smoke from his cigar, "the first time I sang in public the audience simply showered me with bouquets. Bless you, there were enough to start a flower-shop!"

"Faith, an' I can beat you!" cried the Irishman. "The first toime I sang was at an open-air concert, and, begorra, the audience were that deloighted they presented me with a house, they did!"

"A house! You must be off your head!" interrupted the American scoffingly.

"Not at all," answered Pat. "I tell ye they gave me a house—but it was a brick at a toime!"

Doing His Best.

Murphy's wife was ill. So Murphy—for he was only newly wed—decided, on completing his day's work, to try to make himself generally useful in the house.

Accordingly, he bought a pound of bacon and a pound of soap, and set about—so he thought—to prepare a savoury meal for his ailing wife.

The latter, however, even on her bed of sickness, detected the ensuing smell, and sniffed at it wonderingly.

Then, as the odour grew stronger and more unpleasant, she hastened to the kitchen as quickly as she could, and—

"What are you doing, Murphy?" she inquired.

"Cookin' bacon," came the blunt reply.

"Bacon, man! Why, that's soap!"

"Then, bedad," exclaimed the Irishman, "I must have washed me shirt wid the bacon!"

Kind Little Arthur.

"Hey! What are ye doing there?" Little Arthur was caught. He was up the pear-tree, his pockets full of luscious fruit, while below stood a bull-terrier, trying wildly and frantically to reach him.

And the owner of tree and dog had just come upon the scene.

"What d'ye want up my pear-tree, young feller?" asked the farmer again, in gruff and angry tones.

Little Arthur thought furiously for a few moments. Then he said:

"P-p-please, sir, t-t-trying to teach your d-d-dog to stand on his h-h-hind legs!"

The Doctor: "You understand, don't you, that this is only to be used externally?"

The Patient's Wife: "Sure, sir, I allus makes him get out o' bed to drink it!"

To-morrow's a New Day.

A Very Striking and Absorbing Complete Story of City Life.

By Shepperd Pearson.

The gas-jets had been lowered, and the preacher—a pin-point of white in the dimness of the aisle and transept—swayed in his pulpit, delivering his message:

"Life is just opportunity! To-morrow's a new day, and each day comes laden with great gifts."

At the far end of the nave—in that corner where the draughts frolic—John Min shivered, and his mind went wandering to the thrilling situation in which he had left the hero of a certain detective story that was waiting for his return on the table at his lodgings.

John Min had not been following the sermon. But now some door, so to speak, must have opened in his brain, through which the preacher's words sprang full on his attention. And the words perplexed him.

He wondered what his employers, Messrs. Carboy, those hard, cold folk, would say if he informed them in the morning that he was going to people the day with great deeds? They would ask him if he was mad, he thought, and send him harshly back to his invoices and stool.

John Min was barely twenty yet, but to him life seemed no opportunity—it never had seemed so—and to-morrow was scarcely a new day. To John Min life had always been a ledger, and each to-morrow was a page—or is it folio, John?—devoted and appropriated to mechanical arithmetic. Page by page he turned them patiently each week.

It was only on Sunday—the seventh page—that John Min felt he lived. For then he absorbed detective stories, and went occasionally to church.

"To-morrow is laden with great gifts!"

John Min knit his brows, and pondered on. What great gifts could "to-morrow" bring to him, a foundling, a friendless waif who had been placed eleven years ago in Messrs. Carboys' office, and promoted from addressing envelopes and copying letters, had been perched upon a stool before invoices and day-sheets?

Year after year he had sat upon that stool, and added and subtracted and divided. His life was just line-ruling and ciphering John, the charity boy, they often called him. The charity boy with no friends in the world.

"Life is a great trust. We are trusted to do something in the world which no other but ourselves can do."

John Min shut his eyes and tried for just a moment to believe that nobody except himself could be trusted to rule those lines of red and black, and check those invoices. But his honesty laughed at the idea, and all his thoughts rebelled against the preacher. Fine words they seemed, oh, very fine—but only words! When had his day been his hour? And what great trust was there in sitting on an office stool, and in doing his small jobs?

The preacher pronounced the benediction, the last hymn was sung; and John went thoughtfully and moodily to his solitary rooms and supper. He took his book up, but to-night he could not read. Between his mind and the adventures of that wonderful detective came the picture of the preacher, and the echo of the words that had arrested him.

"To-morrow's a new day!"

How insistently the phrase returned! And his to-morrows were never new.

In the dust on Messrs. Carboys' windows—Messrs. Carboy had no money, they declared, to waste on window-cleaning—a small youth, of mischievous appearance, had succeeded in tracing an impertinent caricature of John Min, when that humble individual pushed through the office doors next morning.

Although the hour was just striking, John entered hastily, his lips framed to an apology lest the head clerk should have happened to have come before him. For Messrs. Carboy would also tell him, very often, that they had no time to bestow on loafers, on idlers taken out of charity.

John shared an outer office with the mischievous youth—the clerks in the big counting-house behind them—and his life was made no brighter by the pranks the other played on him. Quiet and spiritless, John bore it all with patience, perched high before his desk, adding and subtracting and dividing.

But the boy remarked this morning that John's pen was scarcely travelling as diligently as usual down the sheets of tots before him. Indeed, more than once it paused idle in mid-air, while John stared vacantly into space.

"Got a head on you this morning, Min?" the boy inquired, with a saucy laugh.

John started from his dreams.

"Eh, what?" he said. "Er—I was thinking—thinking, Jules."

Jules watched him furtively. He wondered what dull old Min was thinking of.

Min drew a litter of invoices from his desk, and presently he lifted out the japanned box in which he kept the office petty cash. Then, having regarded Jules abstractedly for five long minutes, he slipped heavily from his stool and inquired for the petty cash-book. Jules had lately been promoted to the keeping of this book.

Jules eyed him queerly as he climbed back to his stool with it. Min turned, and caught the look.

"Eh, Jules?" he said. "You're looking white. What is it?"

"Nothing, Min," the boy cried quickly. "But I'm so hungry."

"It isn't twelve yet, Jules."

"Can I pop off to my lunch now? I—I'm just starving! Do you mind?"

The boy slipped away, and presently John began to feel hungry in his turn. He thought of a secluded little shop, where the dominoes are heard to rattle, and where lean purses are provided for. John thought, a little greedily, of his roll and pat of butter; and he told himself that to-day his glass of milk should be returned if plundered of the cream that had belonged to it. For to-day he would assert himself. To-day he would not wait meekly till everyone about him had been served—as usually he did. Oh, no! He would rap loudly on his table, and bid them hurry up!

But whatever in the world was keeping Jules? The boy should have been back an hour since! It was not till two o'clock that John went slowly out.

In twenty minutes he was back again. But not, as he expected, to find Jules there. No; the lad's papers were strewn as he had left them, and his stool was vacant still.

Min could not understand it. He took his coat off, and his muffler, and returned to his invoices and day-sheets—to his ruling, adding, and subtracting. But soon he found it necessary to consult some item in the petty cash-book, and opened it and drew it to him.

Suddenly, when he had searched it for a few minutes, he started with a little exclamation, and, reaching to the rack above him for a file of small receipts, he turned the folios of the cash-book with a hand that trembled. And so from the file to the book, and

from book to file again. He compared, he puzzled, he made notes.

"Extraordinary!" he muttered, his troubled face bent low, his forefinger arrested on a cipher. "Quite extraordinary! Of course, it should be four."

For a long time he was thus engaged, fluttering between the papers and the book, until a clatter of teacups in the counting-house reminded him that four o'clock had come. But it had not brought Jules back.

Min straightened his bent shoulders, and, sitting very nearly upright, he stared at the boy's vacant stool.

The empty stool stared back at him significantly.

"Jules has only gone to lunch," Min muttered.

"Do you think he's coming back?" the stool appeared to answer.

"A four? Yes, certainly, it should be a four," said Min.

"Jules knows that as well as you do," stared the stool.

"Oh, no! It's only a mistake of his," said Min.

"Then why not have a peep in his desk?" the stool suggested.

John Min pondered this idea, and yielded to it. With the guilty feeling of a spy, he raised the flap of Jules's desk. And the first thing that his eyes alighted on was a paper devoted to horse-racing, and some memoranda of horses that had been "sure to win" and had not.

Then he came upon a betting-book, and, studying it, he learned poor Jules's secret.

Min knew at last why £1 appeared in the cash-book where the £4 should have stood, and what Jules had done with the three pounds in default—three pounds that belonged to Messrs. Carboy.

Jules had been gambling. And to pay his debts he had taken the money from the firm. And to hide his theft he had altered the figures in the cash-book.

As he shut the desk again the clock struck six, and one by one the clerks came filtering through the outer office from the counting-house and passed into the street. The head clerk, coming last, tossed the keys to him, as usual, and bade him to lock up as soon as he had finished.

"Good-night," he said.

"Good-night, sir," answered Min. But he made no haste to follow.

He raked his fire together, and putting an audacious little kettle on it he brewed himself a cup of tea. He wanted to consider his discovery. And his reflections were distinctly pleasant.

Undoubtedly that mischievous young Jules would scratch no more caricatures of him upon the window-pane; would hide his ruler and his pens no more; would never torment him at his work again. Undoubtedly, when next morning he reported him, Master Jules would be taken before the magistrates at the Mansion House. And serve him right, thought John.

Yes, young Jules would go to gaol, for there was no childish sentiment about his Messrs. Carboy. They would not, like some people, show any mercy to young Jules's years. Not they! The lad has made his own bed, they would declare. So let him lie on it.

But Carboys would be pleased, John fancied, with their Mr. Min. A little astonished at his cleverness perhaps, but grateful—most grateful. They might even go so far as to promote him for it. What a day to-morrow was going to be for him!

What a day to-morrow was going to be for him—eh? Now, how were those words so familiar?

He drained the last drop in his teapot, and pushed his cup aside. For all at once it seemed that he

John found Jules in the lodging-house by the docks, and the boy started guiltily at sight of him. "What are you doing here?" said Min gently.

was in a church again, and listened to a preacher who was swaying in his pulpit.

"We are trusted——" Now, what had that preacher said? "We are trusted to do something in the world which no other but ourselves can do."

Well, could anyone else have discovered Master Jules's monkey tricks? Now, could they—could they?

John Min looked proudly round the office, and for the second time his eyes were held by the well-worn vacant stool of the defaulter.

He began to frown.

The sight of it offended him. On his mood it struck unwelcomely. The stool, he fancied, challenged him to argument.

"Great deeds, John!" it sneered. "Oh, very great!"

"Eh?" he growled at it.

"Remember, John. To-morrow's a new day. No longer you're the slave of yesterday, John Min."

"Eh?" Min growled again.

"Think, John. Jules is nothing but a boy!"

"Yes, but I detected him," protested Min.

"Pooh! Any idiot could have done that," the stool seemed to retort.

"Well?" Min hesitated. "Well?"

"Any idiot could have detected him, John Min. But there's only one person can save him—only one in all the world, John Min!"

John Min was trembling, and his heart beat fast.

"Why," he murmured—"why?"

"Because," he thought the stool replied—"because when Jules doesn't come to-morrow the firm will find him out. Then, John, he'll go to gaol. And his mother is a widow."

John rose slowly, frowning at the stool.

"He's baited me enough," he growled.

"His mother is a widow, John. And he's her only son."

"He shouldn't steal," growled John.

"He's only a boy," the stool seemed to insist—"a child, John. And he was tempted, John."

(Continued on page 34.)

His Sports, Hobbies, and Amusements.

TRUING A CYCLE WHEEL.

After having ridden a bicycle for a good length of time, it is frequently found that the wheels are not quite true. The following is a good method for truing the wheels:

After washing the wheel, spin it whilst holding a piece of chalk firmly on the fork or stay, so that it just touches the parts of the edge of the rim that are not true.

Stop the wheel, and wherever the rim is chalked, tighten the nipples on the spokes which are connected on the opposite side of the hub. Give them a turn or two with a screw-key.

Now repeat the whole process from the other side of the wheel, chalking and tightening until the wheel is dead true. With rim brakes now so general, it is necessary to have the wheels quite true to ensure easy braking action.

WHERE SHOULD YOU FIELD?

There are certain positions on the cricket-field that need special qualities, so here are a few hints regarding them.

First, as to the position of wicket-keeper. Without doubt, this is the most difficult of all places on the field. The wicket-keeper's three important duties are to hold catches at the wicket, to stump batsmen who miss the ball and who have stepped out from the crease, and to run batsmen out when the ball is thrown in by the fieldsmen.

He should be possessed of a quick eye and good nerve, and should remember to always get behind the wicket when the ball is about to be thrown in.

Point is not an easy position to fill. The lad fielding in this place should be chosen for his ability as a "catch," his keen eyesight, his activity, and his nerve. The more active he is, the better: and he should be able to catch and stop balls as easily with the left hand as with the right.

The place of slip, which is usually given to the resting bowler, requires all the qualities just mentioned, but activity is not quite so essential here.

It is customary in many amateur clubs for the "duffers" amongst fieldsmen to be put into the long field. This is a mistake that is usually expensive. Of all others upon the field, the boy at "long-field" should be a safe catch, especially at balls that come tearing down from a great height with terrific speed and force, and he should be a strong as well as a straight thrower.

To catch balls that have been sent up to a great height requires a vast amount of skill and experience. Keep the hands well together, at about the level of the chest, and, as the ball reaches them, lower them a few inches. The object of this movement is to prevent the ball rebounding, and it also helps to prevent the ball from stinging the hands.

TAKE CARE OF YOUR GARDEN PATHS.

Just as the authorities usually repair the roads in the summer, so should amateur gardeners repair their paths. The materials are so much easier to handle when they are dry, and the results are far more satisfactory than is the case when the work is done in winter-time.

There is no sense whatever in pick-axing up a path pell-mell. A far better plan is to break up the surface with a garden-fork, keeping the tines of the fork in a horizontal position, and disturbing no more than an inch or two of the gravel. In this way all weeds may be cleared; and when the top-dressing is applied, the surface may be raked into a convex shape with ease.

The great points in path-making are these:

Have a good foundation of large flints or stones. Then apply a layer of large gravel. Finish off with a sandy gravel, a good binding material; it is called "hoggin" in some parts of the country. Always make your paths slightly higher in the middle that at the sides.

PREPARING TO GET AUTUMN EGGS.

If the poultry-keeper is to have a good supply of eggs in the autumn, he must make arrangements now. In two months' time eggs will be getting very scarce and dear, and that will be the time for profit to be made by those who are wide awake.

Get rid of all the useless old hens at once, and give special care and attention now to the growing pullets—especially those who are "doing well."

It pays now to encourage the promising, and to clear out the wastrels at any price. Feed the growing pullets on oats, with a handful of chopped meat twice a day, and let them have constant change of ground.

A SWIMMING FEAT.

The plunge is a very simple swimming feat and one which any lad who can swim a hundred yards or so ought to be able to accomplish.

In making the plunge, stand on the bank, with the toes projecting over the edge. Then, after expanding the lungs and filling them with air, bend the body from the hips over the water, raise the hands straight up in front of the body in line with the head, and then spring vigorously into the water, keeping the body perfectly rigid. Do not go too deep, but keep the back of the hands towards the surface of the water, thumbs clasped together.

When you reach the top, lightly depress the wrists, so that the hands are just above the surface of the water, and glide along as far as you possibly can.

PRINTING PHOTOGRAPHS.

Always print somewhat darker than you want the finished picture to appear, otherwise the print will look faded and washed out. Experience will teach you the proper shade to print.

Print in diffused light, unless the negative is very dense and opaque, when direct sunlight may be used.

Avoid exposing the prints to light unnecessarily before finishing them off, as this tends to destroy the clearness of the pictures.

When toning the prints, do so in a weak light, as the prints are still sensitive to light until they are fixed.

Wash well after fixing, as the permanency of the image is greatly impaired by leaving any hypo on the film.

If the prints are to be glazed, it is advisable to let them dry first, and then wet them again before squeegeeing. This minimises the risk of sticking on the ferrotype plate.

LONG JUMPING.

The novice at long or horizontal jumping should commence with very short distances, and endeavour from the first to leap neatly and gracefully, the distance being gradually increased as he becomes more proficient.

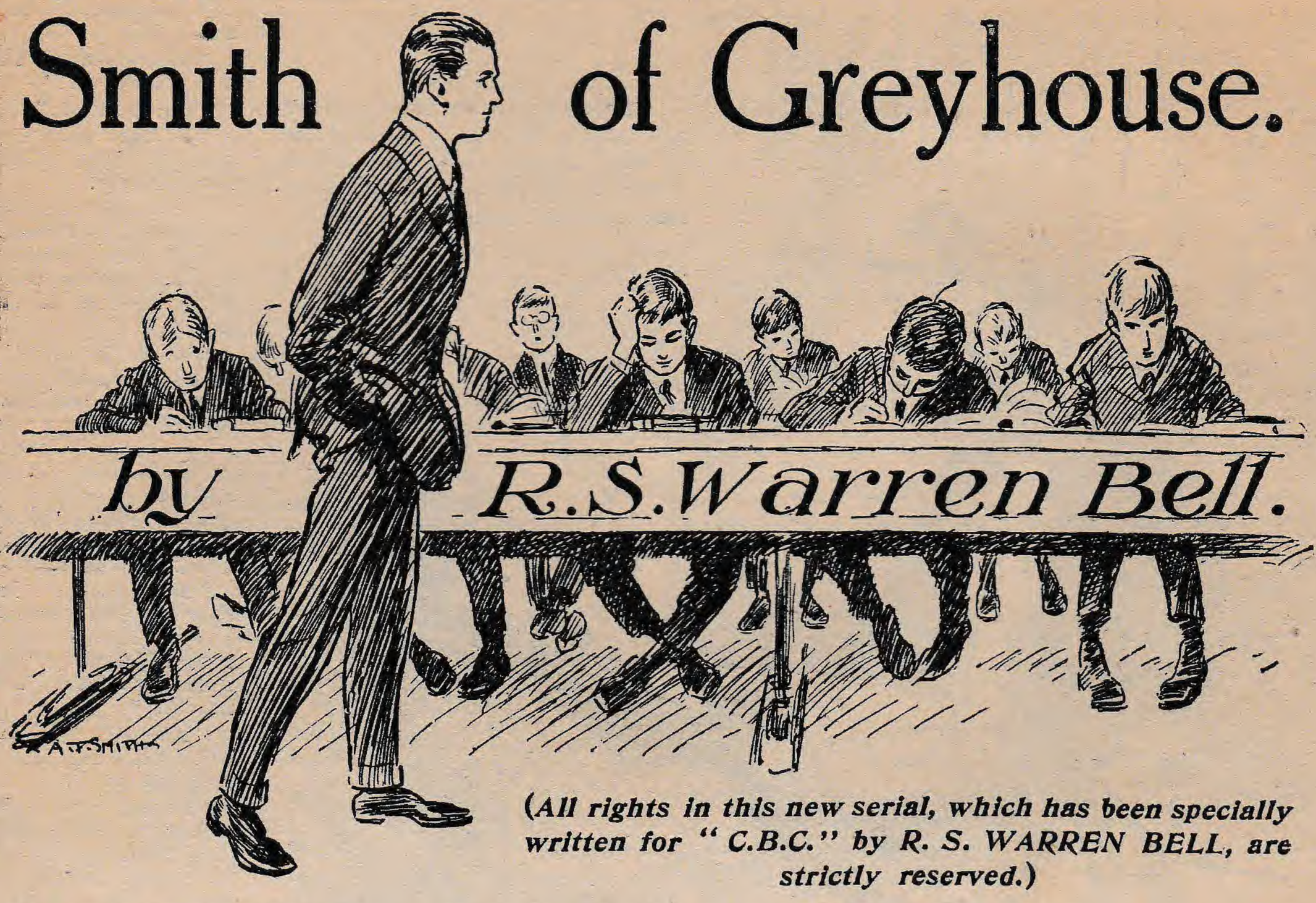
In order to be able to execute a long jump without a preliminary run, stand at the starting-off spot, bend the legs slightly, and throw the arms forward to the height of the shoulders, the hands being closed. Repeat this bending of the knees two or three times in order to add power to the jump. Then press the soles of the feet hard against the ground, and, with a vigorous and quick spring, launch yourself forward. Alight on the toes, and immediately bend the knees in order to break the force of the fall.

In accomplishing the high jump, you must endeavour to go over the bar in a sitting posture. Let one leg clear the bar first, the other swinging up and over instantly. Spring upwards from the take-off with all your energy, with just enough forward impetus to clear the crossbar.

In negotiating the running jump, you should start off at a smart pace some distance from the spot where you intend to "take-off," gradually increasing the speed. Immediately you reach the spot from which you are going to jump, leap forward, without pausing for an instant, so as not to lose any of the impetus of the run.

In rising to the leap, press the balls of the feet hard aground, and throw the arms forward. On alighting, bend the knees, and throw the body backward. The essentials for this jump are to leap from the ground with as much force as possible, and to alight as lightly as possible.

Smith of Greyhouse.



by R. S. Warren Bell.

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ALL YOU NEED TO KNOW.

BOB SMITH, of Greyhouse, has to leave school owing to financial troubles at home, and in reply to an advertisement he gets an appointment as master at the Hill House School, Levenick.

When Bob arrives to take up his duties he is unable to see the Head, who is suffering from a nervous breakdown.

In Another Man's Shoes.

The Head's daughter, pretty ELSIE WITTERING, discovers that it was another "Mr. Smith" who should have been engaged as a master; but it is too late now to put matters right, and so for the time being Bob consents to do his best for the school.

No Corporal Punishment

is allowed, and the bigger fellows, who are known as the Army pups, are left to do pretty much as they please.

Bob soon asserts his authority, to the intense surprise of Herr Vogelhasset, a corpulent German master, and Mr. Williams, a mild assistant teacher.

The latter writes to the Head's brother, Mr. Arthur Wittering, who promptly comes down on a surprise visit to the school, for the purpose of setting matters to rights.

Up Against It.

Elsie looked very straight at her uncle. And the look she cast on Mr. Arthur Wittering was hardly one of niece-like affection. Uncle Arthur was, indeed, no favourite of hers. He was a hard, cold, calculating man. To make money—to save up money—to lend money at exorbitant interest, this was his life-work.

Just now he was all of a tremble because any disturbance at the Hill House threatened to affect his pocket. He had a fat share in the school. His brother Alfred was weak, but clever and experienced. A man who spent money freely, he never had much in the bank, and so, when he wanted to buy the Hill House, the money must be sought from Brother Arthur. And it had proved a good investment for Arthur. It was only one of many good investments, but Mr. Arthur was as anxious about each pie he had a finger in as if it were the sole pie he had helped to bake.

Mr. Arthur Wittering read the dislike in his niece's eyes, but he didn't care. He did not intend that this chit should ever have a penny of his.

"Go along," he said roughly, "and find the fellow."

"I have fetched him once," said Elsie. "If you want him again you must send Webb for him."

And she walked out of the room.

Mr. Wittering rang the bell.

"Tell Mr. Smith I wish to see him," he said to the butler.

While he waited, the solicitor gazed out upon the pleasant expanse on which his brother had lavished so much care and money. He could not deny that the look of it all was good for business; but he begrudged the money. The keeping up of it meant a lot of wages—a lot of wages.

He turned from the window with a sort of snarl, and at that moment Smith came in.

"Well, Mr. Smith," said the lawyer, showing his yellow teeth in a mirthless grin, "now those busy-bodies are gone we can get to business."

"When you have told me who you are, and what precisely your business is," said Smith coldly.

He had not relished his carpeting before the parents, and this second summons had annoyed him. He was quite prepared to receive his conge from the headmaster, but being talked to by this person—whoever he might be—was quite another matter.

"I will soon tell you who I am," returned Arthur Wittering savagely. He gestured towards the windows. "Do you see all this? Do you see those wide fields and this elaborate garden? Have you seen the kitchen garden? Have you seen the stables and coach-house? Have you seen the hot-houses? I suppose you have noticed what a big house it is—how lofty the rooms are, the splendid architecture and solid building of the place? Perhaps you have noticed, too, the perfect position of the school—that it stands on gently-rising ground, and is surrounded on all sides by undulating, well-wooded country! Perhaps you've taken all this in. There's no knowing, though."

"What of it?" asked Bob, in a bored way.

"What of it!" Pressing his fingers into his palms, Mr. Wittering drew his elbows into his sides, and as he did this he stuck out his lean chin and glared at Bob. "What of it! Why, I bought it!"

"A bargain, no doubt," said Bob, taking a chair.

"I see you are an utterly unsuitable person to remain on the staff of this school," said Mr. Arthur Wittering fiercely. "I must therefore terminate your engagement."

"I don't know so much—I don't know so much," returned the miserly solicitor, his forehead wrinkled with gnawing doubt. "I gave a thundering lot of money for it, sir, and it will be a long time before I see it back. Briefly, sir, I am the headmaster's brother, and a co-partner in the Hill House."

"I think I might have been told that before," said Bob.

"Well, you know it now. Yes, sir, I have sunk fourteen thousand pounds in this property, and of one thing I'm quite certain, and that is, that persons of your kidney won't help me get it back. It would be the other way about, indeed," almost whined Mr. Arthur. "A few more like you and the school would be ruined."

"Well," said Bob, "all this is interesting enough in its way, but we're not getting on. I gather from your remarks that you bought the Hill House, and got your brother to run it as a school, and I suppose you go halves in the profits. Not at all a bad arrangement. And now you're afraid I shall be the cause of boys being removed. Is that the correct lunch score?"

Mr. Wittering's bushy grey eyebrows came together fiercely.

"You do not seem to realise my position, sir," he said, with a dignity that hardly seemed to sit well on him after the auctioneer-like way in which he had told off the points of the estate, "or you would not treat the co-principal of this school with such levity. I was inclined to make allowances for you before—you are obviously very young and inexperienced—but now I see you are an utterly unsuitable person to remain on the staff of this school. I must therefore terminate your engagement."

"I'm sorry I can't humour you," said Bob calmly, "but I was engaged by Mr. Wittering, and if I'm to be sacked, I'll be sacked by him."

He moved towards the door.

"We'll soon see about that." And the solicitor brushed rapidly past Bob. "A word to my brother, and it will be settled."

With that he went straight to his sick brother's bed-room and applied his knuckles to the door.

It was opened by the trained nurse in attendance on both invalids.

"Yes?"

"I want to see Mr. Wittering. I am Mr. Arthur Wittering."

"Mr. Wittering can see nobody," said the nurse.

"Nonsense! I must see him!"

"Those are the doctor's orders!"

"But I insist!"

"I am sorry—so must I," replied the nurse firmly.

"It is on a matter of grave importance," urged the solicitor. "I have come down from London to see him."

"That is all the more reason why you should not see him, Mr. Wittering. He has been semi-delirious some days, and a 'matter of grave importance' would certainly bring about a relapse."

"Nonsense! He only has bad nerves. I have conducted business with many men suffering from bad nerves."

"Not with the kind Mr. Wittering has," said the nurse.

She had closed the sick-room door, and was standing on the little mat outside the door. Mr. Arthur had half a mind to push past her, but she was a well-built young woman, with a decided chin, and had her fingers, he noticed, closed tightly on the door-handle.

With a muttered exclamation, Mr. Arthur turned on his heel, and went downstairs again. He believed this to be all bosh about the seriousness of his brother's illness. Faddy, nervous fellow, Alfred.

He would wait about—go for a stroll round the grounds—and pop in on Alfred when the nurse was off duty. She was bound to go for a walk some time that evening.

Mr. Arthur had arrived at this resolution as he reached the hall, and at that moment a motor-car pulled up at the front door, and a fair, keen-faced young man came in without bothering to ring.

"Ah, Mr. Wittering, how do you do?" It was the doctor, and, of course, he knew the co-principal. "Come down to see how the patients are getting on, I suppose? Well, they're doing as well as can be expected."

"I'll go up with you," said the solicitor, in his most casual tone. "I want to have a word with Alfred."

"Sorry, I can't allow that," said the doctor. "Monday or Tuesday, perhaps."

"But it's important."

"Then it had better keep till Wednesday."

"Well, this is most annoying! And I've come all the way from——"

But the doctor was six stairs up. And, as a man of Mr. Arthur Wittering's years and station could hardly lurk about the staircase and corridors in order to go into a sick-room that had been forbidden him, Mr. Arthur Wittering, without troubling to say good-bye to anyone or wait while a carriage was got ready for him, put on his tall hat and spring overcoat, and set off on foot to Levenick in the worst temper imaginable.

Biggleswade v. Bencraft.

"The cub!" exclaimed Mr. Arthur, as he conveyed his lean form along by the green hedges. "Wait till Alfred is up! He'll sing another tune then! Impertinence—and a day wasted! I'll teach the cub!"

So exasperated was the lawyer that the afternoon postman, padding along with canvas bag over his shoulder, had to side-step into the hedge to avoid the umbrella which Mr. Arthur was twizzling round in his rage.

As it happened, a glimpse at a letter in that canvas bag would have afforded Mr. Arthur considerable satisfaction. It would also have been a powerful weapon in his hands, for it would have exposed Bob's Smith's weakest side to him.

Bob's face fell considerably when he read it.

"My dear Robert," ran the letter, —"It is really most disappointing to hear that the post—and such a good post—was not intended for you, after all. It looks very much as if you will have to come home when Mr. Wittering is able to go into the matter, as, of course, you are not old enough to fill a senior mastership. It is very disappointing and annoying, especially as your father's recent loss of capital is much more serious than he led you to suppose. I think you ought to know this. We shall have to economise now, and perhaps go into a smaller house. There is, of course, a possibility that Mr. Wittering may like to keep you on as a junior master, so do all you can to stay at the Hill House, as it is imperative that you should have something to do and be able to keep yourself. I shall hope to receive good news, but if I don't I shall know you are not to blame. With love, dear boy.—Your affectionate MOTHER."

Bob's eyes were a little misty as he read this letter again. He saw there was trouble at home, and that his mother was writing with a heavy heart.

So he stood, with his letter between finger and thumb, gloomy thoughts in his mind. And Elsie, coming upon him just then, noticed the look on his face.

"What's the matter?" she asked, in her downright way.

"Bit of a wail from home," replied Bob. "Rather necessary just now for me to keep my nose to the grindstone, and all that sort of thing."

"I see!" said Elsie, with complete comprehension. "Well, come and have some tea."

"Thanks!" said Bob. "But that sound of a brick-bat hitting up against an iron gate is really the voice of the sergeant calling the boys from their play, and I'm due to help him. And I want to get out of these very proper togs as well."

"It can all wait for a few minutes," said Elsie. "You've had no tea, and you've had rather an exciting afternoon so far. In fact, for the first time since I've known you, you look rather pale."

"Do I?" said Bob. "I don't feel pale."

Elsie rang for Webb and ordered a third tea; then settled herself comfortably in the Chesterfield. Bob took a seat near her.

"What should you do if I were to faint?" he asked.

"Dab eau-de-Cologne on your forehead," said Elsie, "and then you'd open your eyes and give me a dreamy smile, and go off again. Faints are like that. Then Dr. Whiteman would come down and order me out of the room, and then he and Webb would smack your hands and pour brandy between your teeth."

The great battle of Biggleswade versus Bencraft was in full swing, when a totally unexpected interruption occurred.

"And, seeing that wouldn't bring me round, they'd call old Vogel in, and he'd puff some of his 'baccy in my face, and I should jump up like a squirrel!" added Bob, with a broad grin.

"But old Vogel isn't here to do that," said Elsie; "and, as Mr. Williams is away, too, I suppose that's why they haven't put tea in the common-room. I peeped in and saw they hadn't. Hence this honour."

To the sound of the sergeant's hardly Caruso-like tones, Bob did good work among the dainties pressed upon him by his hostess. Mindful of his duties, and not being a shirker, he was soon on his feet again and off to change.

His room looked on to the garden, but it also commanded a good view of the playground. And the playground just now was very lively. Ignoring the hoarse shouts of Sergeant Hollis, the drill instructor, the Hillites were crowding round a couple of their fellows engaged in hot dispute. Bob was not at all surprised to find that Sergeant Hollis's commands fell on deaf ears. It seemed to be the way here for people set in authority to have no authority. The boys, in the mass, were no better and no worse than any other boys; but, as they found that nothing painful happened to them if they took their time about obeying commands, they naturally took their time.

The sergeant, like all old soldiers, loved order and discipline, with the consequence that, though, like everybody else at the Hill House, he was paid well for his services, he regarded this particular afternoon as the black spot of his week.

"Fall in, please! Fall in! Do you 'ear me, young gentlemen—fall in!"

They heard him all right, but there it ended. The dispute between Bencraft and Biggleswade was far more interesting. Bencraft had told Biggleswade he was a young slug for siding with Smith, because it had been agreed to take united action against Smith. Biggleswade had retorted that Smith was a jolly good chap, and that it was a dirty, rotten thing to set on him like that. Bencraft had then made a point by asking Biggleswade why he had not expressed this view when the meeting was held, and Biggleswade, not knowing what to reply, had said that Bencraft was a cad to chuck his book at Smith when Smith hadn't touched him.

This seemed to Biggleswade rather a happy answer. After all, Smith hadn't touched anyone when Bencraft slung that drawing-book at his head.

"But I said I'd start it, and I had to," retorted Bencraft.

Both disputants were now very red in the face, and the crowd that had gathered was pushing them closer and closer together.

It was at this point that Bob first observed the scene from his window.

The feeling against Smith being still one of deadly hatred, the general hope was that Bencraft would set about Biggleswade and punch his head for helping Smith. But although Bencraft was a head taller than Biggleswade, he was well aware of the latter's extreme willingness to take on anybody who wanted a row. He had never known Biggleswade to tackle a senior, but he had watched him demolish half a dozen fellows of his own age and size.

At last somebody gave Biggleswade a push that sent him flying into Bencraft.

"Where are you coming to?" demanded Bencraft, pushing Biggleswade back.

Angered by the two pushes, Biggleswade clenched his fist and hit Bencraft on the second button of the waistcoat, and Bencraft, jumping forward, seized Biggleswade by the throat and forced him right through the crowd.

"Fall in, gents., please—fall in!" pleaded Sergeant Hollis.

"Go on, Bencraft—slay the young brute!" bawled a voice, and amid a chorus of shouts, Bencraft released Biggleswade and stood over him, breathing hard.

"Say any more, and I'll jolly well lick you!" he observed. But he did not want to lick Biggleswade, and rather thought the latter had had enough.

It appeared that Biggleswade was in two minds about what to do next, and possibly the incident would have ended there, had not some kind friend given him another shove into Bencraft. This time, Bencraft received him with a clean, open-handed smack across the cheek, and Biggleswade replied by pounding Bencraft on the nose. It was a pound, as one might say, with sixteen full ounces in it, for his fist caught Bencraft on the point of the nose, and the effect was disconcerting, for the nose is a very sensitive organ. A blow over the nostrils will still the tantrums of a horse, and a bull is led by a rope attached to a ring in his nose, because he is sensitive in that quarter.

Bencraft reeled back, but not far as the fellows were thick about him. A senior called out:

"Go on, Benny! Don't let a kid like that whack you!"

At this Bencraft woke up and let fly a hail of blows at Biggleswade. Weight and height will tell, and for a moment Biggleswade was smothered. He retreated, but he could not get away further than the ring that had been formed permitted him, and finding that he had his back to a human wall, hit out wildly. Most of his blows fell on the air, or on Bencraft's arms, but one reached Bencraft's eye and made him blink.

"Give 'em room," shouted Pearce, pushing the fellows back as the combatants paused for breath, and stood eyeing one another fiercely.

Bob Smith was, of course, changing as rapidly as possible in order to go down and restore order with the least possible delay. But for all that, he couldn't help going to the window at intervals to see how matters were progressing, and as Bencraft and Biggleswade fell to again, as a lover of the fistic art, he couldn't help stopping there to see how they shaped.

He could tell at a glance that neither knew anything about boxing, otherwise Bencraft, with his longer arms, would have kept Biggleswade from getting in close enough to hit him, while Biggleswade, with his superior agility, would have done more ducking and dodging, and got in more shrewd body blows instead of always trying to reach Bencraft's face.

With science non-existent, and defence at a discount, the two, at any rate, succeeded in supplying sport for the beholders, for they hit each other constantly, and butcher's work was evident on each face—for Biggleswade had hit Bencraft's nose again, and Bencraft had got all his weight into a driving blow that cut Biggleswade's upper lip—when a totally unexpected interruption occurred.

"Stop this! How dare you? Stop this at once, I say!"

At the shrill, familiar tones, the fighters dropped their hands; and doubtless they were glad to. As for the boys forming the ring, they turned to find Elsie Wittering surveying them with flashing eyes.

"I am ashamed of you all!" cried the girl. "Fancy fighting and making all this noise when father and mother are ill! Go to your drill at once."

She stood her ground, looking at them imperiously.

"Fall in, gents, please—fall in!" croaked Sergeant Hollis, and they fell in like lambs.

"Take them down to the field, will you, sergeant?" said Elsie.

"Certainly, miss," replied the old soldier, going down the line with alacrity and arranging the boys in order of height with none too gentle a hand.

And when Bob came down, he walked through silent spaces till he reached the cricket-field.

He found it necessary to say very little during drill, for the inevitable reaction that follows excitement had set in, and the most unruly spirits were willing to work quietly.

The same temper obtained at preparation, and the fellows, after Elsie's rebuke, went to bed with a docility that was unusual with them.

So ended Bob's duty day, and when he turned in to the empty common-room after his solitary supper—for Vogelhasset and Williams were making a thorough half-day off of it—and sank into an easy-chair, for the first time since his sojourn at the Hill House began, this particular apartment seemed to him a real haven of rest.

And, this being a time suitable for calm reflection, he took out his mother's letter and read it through again. With the result that he did not go to bed feeling particularly happy.

(To be continued next Tuesday.)

When in Trouble or in Doubt, Write to Me to Help You Out.

Your Editor's Chat.

My Address: The Fleetway House, Farringdon Street, London, E.C.

My Dear Readers,—I have just returned to town after snatching a brief holiday in the country, and you may be sure that I feel all the good effects of a change of air and a brief spell of rest.

To add to the enthusiasm with which I am taking up the work I delight in, I find my desk piled high with letters, all of them full of praise for CHEER BOYS CHEER, which is still adding fame to its name as the weeks go by.

I thought I would tell you that I have been away for a holiday, because only the other day I was asking you to write and tell me all about your own glorious spell of rest and change by the sea or in the country, and I think that one confidence deserves another. So don't forget, my chums, I shall expect to hear from every one of you, and I want to have nice, long, chatty letters, telling me all about your holidays—where you went, what you did, and the adventures you had.

By the way, no doubt you will have noticed that the features now appearing in CHEER BOYS CHEER are just right for summer weather and summer holidays. I hope to publish some good complete holiday stories during the next few weeks, and, apart from these, most of the other fiction has a breezy air about it.

Our great home-life serial, "Cast on the World," is packed with scenes and adventures round about the country, and Harry Huntingdon's great new school serial has plenty of sport in it.

In addition to this, the present issue of CHEER BOYS CHEER contains the powerful long opening instalment of our striking new "Coral Island" serial,

"ROGUES AND ROVERS."

This is just the time of the year when most of us who have young blood in our veins get a touch of the wander fever, and at such a time we find all the greater pleasure in reading about parts of the world that are grand fields of adventure for those of a roving spirit.

Some of us like to picture ourselves as the heroes of these adventure stories, and in the case of a story like "Rogues and Rovers," it is very easy to do this, because the tale is not full of wild and impossible happenings, but describes just the scenes and adventures any of us might meet with in the wonderful South Seas.

Are there any of my readers who have hitherto missed reading adventure serials? If there are, I would like to say a special word to them.

I have met the boy who does not like adventure stories, and usually I have found his reason to be that the characters did not appeal to him, as they were not real enough. Now, in "Rogues and Rovers" I think I can say with confidence that this fault does not exist.

Although the serial is full of excitement and adventure, the characters are real flesh and blood, and not mere dummies to be shot at, so to speak, and never hit, as is the case in so many adventure tales.

"Rogues and Rovers" is a story of human error, of villainy and treachery, of staunch comradeship and high courage, and as such I hope and believe it will be enjoyed by every reader.

CRUELTY TO ANIMALS.

When I was in the country the other day I chanced upon a band of schoolboys who were rifling birds'-nests and subjecting the young birds to what was nothing less than sheer torture. I am convinced that these boys, like many others I have known, were only acting out of pure thoughtlessness, for any youngster who can deliberately hurt a living creature, knowing all the time the pain he is causing, must be little better than a fiend at heart.

It always gives me great happiness to feel that readers of CHEER BOYS CHEER are sturdy fellows with all the qualities one likes best in young manhood—pluck, chivalry, pity for the weak and helpless, and scorn for anything approaching meanness or cruelty. If, however, any chum of mine has, in a thoughtless moment, caused pain to a pet or any wild creature, I do sincerely trust he will not let it occur again.

Most of us are passionately fond of animals, and the mere thought of tiny, helpless creatures being made to suffer is too painful for words.

"TO-MORROW'S A NEW DAY."

Just now I was talking about the holiday stories in CHEER BOYS CHEER, but there is one tale this week which deals with City life, and it is a tale that deserves special comment.

When I first read this story I thought it good enough for a magazine of the highest class, but this did not deter me from accepting it for our paper.

Although the story is only a very short one, it is really splendidly told, and I should like to hear what you think of it yourselves, especially those of you who work in City offices and know the temptations of business life and can appreciate the humble heroism and self-sacrifice of simple John Min.

A "C.B.C." LEAGUE.

At the time CHEER BOYS CHEER appeared on the market quite a number of fellows wrote to me, asking that a league of "C.B.C." readers might be formed.

At the time I thought the idea a very good one, and it has been in my mind ever since. Up till now various reasons have prevented my carrying this suggestion into effect, but at last I begin to see my way clear towards the formation of a league.

I am convinced that if a league is formed, and if I invite all my readers to join it, the response will be immediate and hearty. You will all do your best to make the league successful, and for my part I shall spare no pains to make it of real benefit and practical service to members.

You will understand, my chums, that this is only a preliminary chat, and that all details will have to be discussed later on. But I really think that with the approach of autumn we shall be able to get the league successfully launched, and when the full announcement is made you will be delighted with the privileges it offers.

I shall, of course, allow every reader to become a member. CHEER BOYS CHEER will be the official organ of the league, and by means of competitions and other features fellows will be able to derive profit as well as pleasure by joining, whilst all the time they will feel that happy sense of friendship which exists whenever a multitude of people are linked together by a real bond of friendship.

I trust that every reader who is interested in this announcement will let me know his opinion about the formation of a league; and, of course, I shall be very pleased to receive ideas and suggestions. You will also be doing me a great favour if you will mention to your schoolfellows, co-workers at business, and any other chums that it is intended to start a really helpful league in this paper.

TO NEW READERS.

There is a certain question that I wish to put to all new readers of "C.B.C." It is this: Have you started to read the serials which you found were already running when you bought this paper for the first time?

Any new reader who fails to read our serials is losing a great treat, and there is not the least reason why he should do so. The brief synopsis at the commencement of each instalment is always kept as short as possible. At the same time, it is always sufficient to give you the complete plot of the story.

Let me assure my new readers that their interest in "C.B.C." will be more than doubled if they will make a point of starting every serial to-day, with the assistance of the synopses where necessary.

£5 FOR CONFESSIONS!

I am going to start an amusing and simple contest in next Tuesday's "C.B.C.," with cash prizes amounting to £5.

There will be no coupon collecting, and, of course, no entrance-fees. Mind you all do your level best to pull off the prizes!

His Missing Chum.

A Seasonable Complete Story of the Holidays.

By Brian Kingston.

"And you ain't afraid, sir?" asked the stout, ruddy-cheeked farmer's wife, as she poured milk into the enamelled iron bottle handed her.

"Afraid! Why, what of?" And Jim Meredith laughed merrily before answering his own question. "There's nothing to be afraid of in camping-out. And it's just the jolliest way of spending a holiday you can think of."

"Well, sir," smiled the kindly old lady back at him, "you may think so, but I wouldn't! Ugh! Think of all the nasty, creepy-crawly things a-getting all over you while you was asleep! I couldn't sleep for thinking of 'em. And then there's tramps an' gipsies—such bad men we do get about the roads here, sir, you'd be surprised. I see too much of 'em!"

"Well, we haven't seen any yet, and I don't think it'd be altogether healthy for them if they did try interfering with us!" replied Jim, having any amount of confidence in the muscles of himself and chum. "I think you needn't worry about us."

"Well, sir, if you likes it, an' enjoys yourselves that's everything; but it wouldn't suit me. Here's the milk, sir, and thank you! You won't drop any of the eggs. I've put in two duck's eggs."

"Thank you! Good-evening!"

And off went Jim Meredith, still smiling to himself at the idea of a camping holiday being unsafe or anything less than the height of enjoyment.

He and Paul Holmes had been holiday-making for four days, and ten more glorious ones lay ahead. They had their bikes, on which were carried without any trouble their small tent and other paraphernalia. They went where they liked, and stopped where and when they pleased.

At the end of the day's ride they found a suitable spot for putting up the tent and making camp; and if there were anything better than sleeping out of doors and waking to the cool freshness and brightness of early morning, it was the jolly meals, cooked over a fire of their own making and enjoyed as no other meals ever had been. The weather was fine and warm, and neither of the chums would have changed places with a king.

The sight of smoke rising slowly in the still air caused Jim to quicken his pace as he neared the camp. The fire meant grub, and Jim knew that he was amazingly hungry. And there was the material to satisfy his hunger—fried eggs and bacon, a loaf purchased at the last village through which they had passed, butter and newly-drawn milk from the farmhouse he had just left, and steaming, fragrant coffee boiled in a saucepan.

"Hurry up and get that bacon cut!" Jim sung out, as he neared the fire.

He stooped down to place the milk and eggs beside the long, flat basket that held the cooking and other utensils. The frying-pan lay on the short, dry turf, but the bacon was not in it yet.

"Come on, lazybones; I'm starving!" he called again.

And still there was no answer.

Stepping quickly to the tent, Jim pulled the flap aside, and poked his head inside.

The tent was empty. On a sheet of newspaper lay a piece of bacon with several slices already cut, also the knife. The waterproof sheets on which Paul and he were to sleep were spread out, a rug on each.

"Got everything all ready, and then mooched off!" muttered Jim, coming towards the fire. "What has the beggar wanted to do that for? I wasn't such a long time gone."

"Paul! Paul! Co-ee-ee-ee!" he shouted.

Nothing happened. There was no answering shout from his chum.

"What's he playing at?" demanded Meredith irritably. "Such silly larks—making supper late! Be his own fault if he gets none!"

Grumbling to himself, Jim set about getting the meal. He cooked the bacon and eggs, made the coffee. Still Holmes didn't turn up.

Jim was annoyed, and with justification. Placing the food near the fire, he started to look about the camp, shouting Paul's name. Five minutes passed; still no result.

It was in a hollow of open, bush-covered commonland, just where the latter joined a wood, that the camp had been pitched, and as the wood was only a small one, Jim searched it thoroughly. It was private property, and on the other side bounded the extensive grounds of a house, the chimney stacks of which were just visible above a mass of greenery.

Going back to the camp, he fell to upon the food. But he ate hurriedly, for the longer Paul was away the less likely his absence seemed due to a joke.

There was no sign of Paul in the wood or about the common, though Jim looked behind every tree and bush. He followed a faint footpath across the waste that led away round the wood, and there at last he made a discovery.

Close by a high wooden fence he found a cloth cap, which was Paul's. Hunting in the long grass, which was badly trampled and beaten down, as though a violent struggle had taken place, he came upon a knife, which he knew belonged to his chum.

Beyond all doubt Paul had fallen a victim to an attack, but at whose hands it was impossible to say.

Darkness was falling, and, though reluctantly, Jim went back to the camp. What to do for the best he could not decide. Should he search still further, or should he get on his bike and ride to the nearest village and acquaint the police?

The sight of a youth cycling along the footpath decided him. A sharp sprint enabled him to head off the cyclist, who pulled up at the shout. In a few words Jim gave a description of his chum, and asked if the lad had seen him.

The yokel shook his head. He had seen no one.

"Then ride as fast as you can to Marrington, and tell the police to come here at once!" directed Jim.

"But I bain't going to Marrington," objected the youth. "I be going home."

"You'll do as you're told!" cried Jim threateningly. "Hurry there as quick as you can! Something's happened to a friend of mine! I'll give you a shilling!" he added.

That was enough. The lad went back the way he had come as fast as his ancient jigger would allow, and Jim hurried for the camp. Perhaps he had been too hasty, after all. Paul might have been playing a joke. He might have taken it into his head to go birdnesting, chasing an inquisitive dog—a dozen things might have happened, the cap and the knife notwithstanding. And coming near to the camp to see a figure, indistinct in the gathering gloom, moving about by the fire, caused Jim to fancy his hopes realised.

He ran forward, shouting in his eagerness, and was disappointed. For the fellow, upright for an instant, looking towards him, suddenly started into a run as though anxious to get away.

Jim put on steam. The man's action was suspicious, to say the least; no doubt he was one who had been concerned with poor Paul's disappearance. But, good runner as Jim was, the man had the advantage of a start, and seemed to know his ground. Into the wood he disappeared, and was lost sight of, Jim, straining every nerve, hot in pursuit.

It was like seeking a needle in a haystack. Jim blundered through the trees, at last almost running slap into a person carrying a lantern—a person who yelled in frantic affright.

"Who are you—who are you?" he cried, in a high, quavering voice, evidently that of an elderly man. "Don't touch me!"

He held up the lantern, and Jim saw that he was an elderly man, well-dressed, pale-faced, and with scared eyes.

"I'm not going to hurt you," Jim answered, quite sure this wasn't the fellow he had been chasing. "Have you seen a man running through here?"

"Then there are more of the wretches? I was sure of it!" was the astonishing answer. "The wood is full of them, and I shall be robbed and

murdered! And you aren't one of them?" he asked, holding the light forward for a better view.

"I don't know who you are talking about, but you aren't likely to be hurt by me," said Jim reassuringly. "I've been hunting for a friend of mine who has disappeared——"

A wild exclamation interrupted him, and the lantern bobbed about as though it meant falling from the holder's shaky hand.

"They've attacked you?" the elderly man cried, in terror. "I shall be the next—I know I shall! For pity's sake, my good sir, come to the assistance of a weak, old man whose life is in danger. Two months ago my house was attacked. Now they mean to finish their work and me, too! Come to my house, sir. I implore you, and protect me from this awful danger!"

Jim began to suspect he was dealing with a lunatic, but the man's fright was genuine enough, and he begged so pitifully for assistance that the lad felt undecided. Paul was missing, the police were coming, and he must see them. On the other hand, this old man——

"Look here, sir," Jim said suddenly, "wait here five minutes, and I'll come back, and, if it's any comfort to you, I'll go with you. But the police——"

"The police!" interrupted the man. "I've sent for them. I came out now to make sure the man I sent had gone. And thank you, young sir, for the promise!"

"Wait until I get back," said Jim.

Then he ran back to the camp. The police were coming, anyway; that was good. No harm would result if an officer came to the camp to find it deserted. In thirty seconds he had roughly scribbled on the back of an envelope "Come to the house behind the wood—I shall be there," signed his name, put the envelope in a cleft stick. which he set up near the tent, and returned to the elderly man.

Through a door in the fence and across extensive and well-kept grounds he accompanied the old man, who was chattering all the time about his fears of thieves and his own peril. At last they reached the house—one of old-fashioned design—and Jim entered with his guide.

Here the latter recovered himself somewhat, and talked freely, although all about his own troubles, and with no interest in listening to Jim. He did not even offer the latter any refreshment. He was the owner of the house; he lived there with several servants, and he was beset by the constant fear of robbery and personal ill-treatment. Ultimately—and Jim was not very sorry—he said he would go to bed. As an afterthought, he showed Jim a room where he, too, might sleep.

But sleep was not for Jim; he didn't even undress, but sat in an easy-chair, thinking about poor Paul Holmes. Where was his chum? What had happened to him? Jim shuddered at the awful fear of his chum's death, of which he could not rid himself. Camping holidays with Paul he had had before, and some wild adventures; but never anything like this.

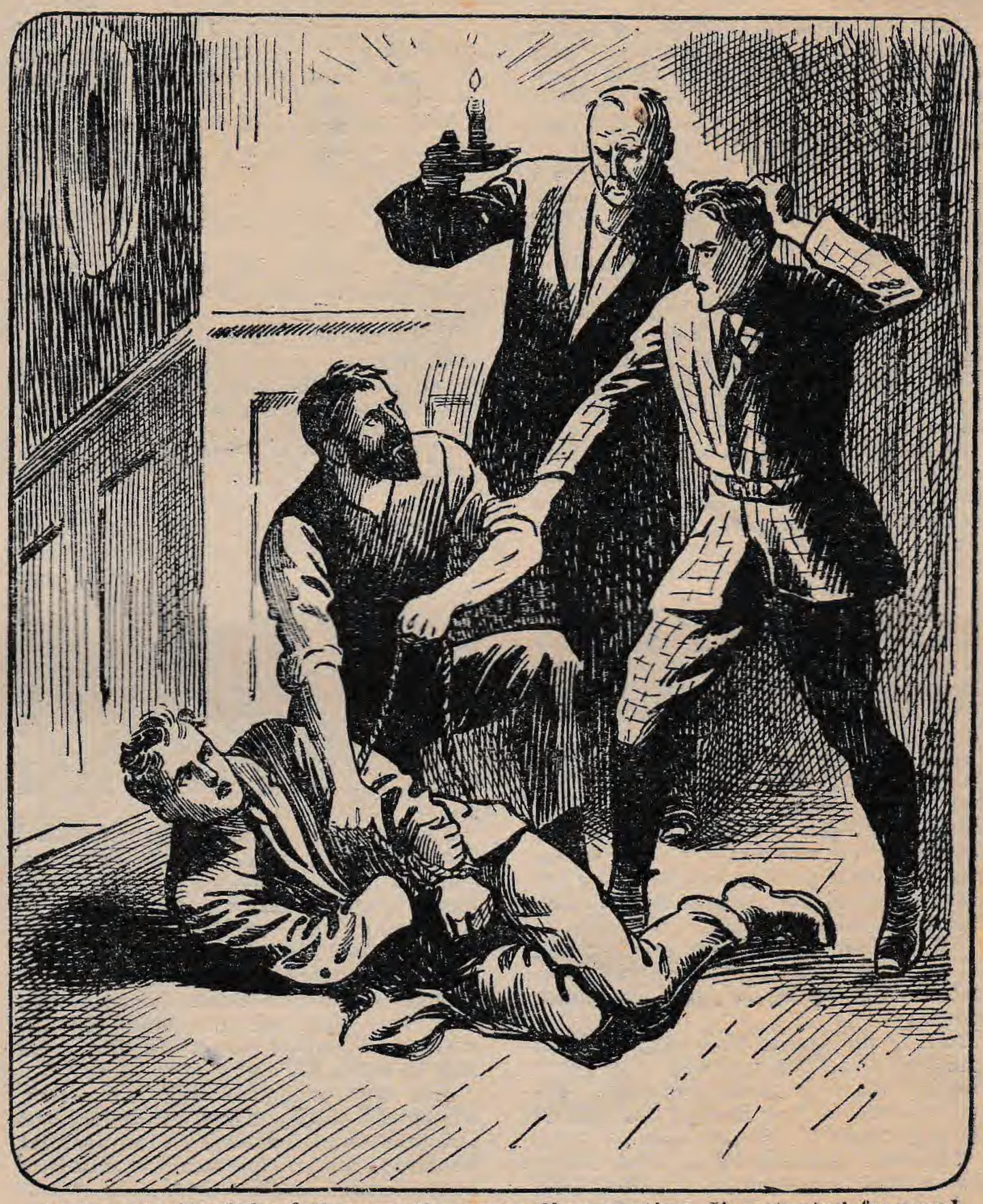
All at once Jim's gloomy meditation was interrupted by a noise. He heard a sound as of a chair knocked over, and, a few seconds after, a door shut abruptly. He sat up, listening. Other sounds followed.

Stepping to his door, he opened it softly, and put out his head. Outside was a corridor, black as a coal-cellar and uncarpeted. Very distinctly Jim heard someone in stout boots trying to walk softly across the bare wood.

The thieves the old man feared so much had surely broken into the house!

Without stopping to put on boots, Jim stepped out. If this were a burglar—and he could distinguish but one prowler—Jim would enjoy a turn-up with him. He might even be one of the brutes who had helped to get rid of Paul. At the thought Jim shut his teeth hard and clenched his fists. Followed minutes of silent work, the prowler succeeding in moving with less noise than before, and Jim with the silent stealth of a wild Indian. He was keyed up for a fight and wanted it quick.

The corridor ended in a broad, square



As the candle-light fell upon the struggling captive, Jim started forward and gazed at him in unspeakable surprise.

landing, with a narrow stairway in one corner. But this the burglar seemed not to know, for a small window in the end wall, through which the moon shone faintly, revealed him to Jim, standing irresolute.

He might or might not be aware of the staircase; but Jim was not going to risk it. He broke into a run, to get hold of the man before he could escape. But as his feet thudded dully upon the floor, the waiting man turned hurriedly, made a rush at a door, threw it open, and bolted into the room, banging the door behind him.

Jim was about to dash at the door when, at the head of the stairway, candle in hand, appeared the owner of the house, wide-eyed with horror.

"What is it?" he whispered. "I heard something, and came up. Are they here?"

"I don't know," Jim whispered back. "But a fellow has just come out of a room on the corridor, and, when he heard me behind him, bolted into that room!"

And he indicated where the man had hidden.

"Came out of your corridor! Then that must be the wretch we captured this evening! How did he get loose? And I did warn Williams to tie him up tightly!"

"A man you've kept prisoner?" asked Jim, in wonderment, for nothing had been said of this.

"Yes; found him waiting to get into the house. Didn't I tell you he was shut up here? Room next but one to yours. That's why I sent Jones for the police."

"Well, he's loose now, and I'm going in to tackle him," said Jim.

"Wait until I call Williams, young sir, for the chap we captured is a most desperate and violent ruffian. He nearly killed Williams!"

"He won't kill me. Here goes! Stop him if he bolts out past me!"

Driving open the door, Jim went in with a rush. The fellow was there all right, and Jim heard the scuttering of his feet as he backed to the wall; but to see anything was out of the question. Banging the door behind him,

Jim made for where he imagined the man to be.

He darted forward, sprang off at a tangent, slipped, grabbed with his hands, and clutched at something that slipped through his fingers, wrenched round with his other hand, and gripped fast on a coat skirt. At the same moment, a blow struck at random hit his face, the knuckles grazing the bridge of his nose and scraping along his cheek.

It was a nasty clout, and the pain made Jim vicious. He brought in his feet, just in time to get his toes severely stamped upon. He lunged with his left hand, and a thrill of satisfaction ran through him, for he got home heavily in the body, causing the recipient to gasp.

Jim had been in several hundred football scrums, and more than one boxing competition, and what happened during the next two or three minutes was a combination of the two, considerably aggravated.

In grim silence the battle raged, the prisoner doing his best to get loose, and put Jim out, and Jim grimly determined to hold on tightly, and do any putting out himself. They punched, they wrestled, they pulled each other here and there, now slipping, recovering themselves, falling into the wall, and rebounding again. Twice they came down headlong, but regained their feet, Jim sticking to his grip like a true British bulldog.

At length he got in a leg trip that laid his opponent flat on his back, half stunning him. Leaving him for a moment, Jim grabbed at the door-handle, flung the door open, and, holding his prisoner by one ankle, dragged him out to the landing.

"It's all right!" gasped Jim to the old man, still holding the candle in his hand, who had cried out shrilly at his appearance. "I've got him safe. I don't think he'll do any fighting for a bit!"

And fighting was the last thing the prone man was likely to attempt. He was but partly conscious, lying passively on the floor and breathing heavily. But the owner of the house, who had been greatly impressed by his previous combat, refused to go near him or consider him safe.

"Keep him there," he cried, "and I'll go and wake up Williams to come and tie him up again until the police come!"

Taking the candle with him, the man vanished down the stairway with great alacrity, his slippers flip-flapping. He had not stayed long enough for Jim to get a glimpse of his prisoner.

"Whew!" breathed Jim, who, as the best means of keeping the fellow safe, had taken a seat on his chest. "That's about the toughest up-and-downer I've had—or want. If this is one of the fellows who set about Holmes, no wonder the poor chap knuckled under. Why, he's strong as a bullock, and savage as a tiger! Thought of penal servitude coming made him fight so hard, I reckon!

"Ah, would you? Yes, groan away!" he said viciously, for the man stirred under him and moaned. "If I knew for certain you had hurt Paul, I'd give you a bit more, helpless though you are!"

Up the stairway came a pair of stockinged feet, and another in slippers. The former belonged to a strapping fellow, with lengths of rope in his hand. He looked disagreeable, and his expression was none the more pleasant for a rapidly blackening eye.

"Tie him up, Williams, firmly this time!" commanded the elderly man, still holding the candle.

Jim rose from his seat to allow Williams to operate, turned to look down on his late antagonist, stooped, and then suddenly stiffened like a board.

The prisoner was Paul Holmes!

With his face bruised, and covered with dust, and smeared with blood, even an old acquaintance might have been mistaken. But Jim's chum it was, right enough; and suddenly Jim moved forward, and with one twist sent aside Williams, who was at work with his rope.

"Let him alone!" shouted Jim.

They looked at him as though faced by a lunatic.

"He's my chum! I thought he had been killed or carried away! Oh, you jackasses!" cried Jim fiercely. "Touch him if you dare, and I'll——"

He clenched both fists, and they understood him all right.

Master and servant gaped at the young man. They staggered back. The elder man first recovered the use of his tongue.

"What's that you say?" he asked tremulously. "He—he's—your accomplice?"

"My chum, I said. And you—you it is who are responsible for his being missing from the camp!"

"Bu-bu-but he's a thief!" stammered the candle-holder. "And y-you——"

"He is not!" shouted Jim, in a voice of thunder, the more angry for knowing that his own hands had inflicted far more damage to Holmes than those of the original captors. "He's honest—more honest than you; and if you say——"

Paul sat up weakly, looking wonderingly around with his undamaged eye. The elderly man, his hand shaking so terribly that the grease dropped all over the floor, turned a face of horror upon his servant.

"Williams," he interrupted Jim, "we've got two of the wretches in the house! What can we do?"

Just at this juncture there resounded through the silence of the house a thundering bell-ringing, and hammering with the knocker.

"That's the police; Jones has brought 'em. I'll go and let 'em in," said the intelligent servant.

And he was down the staircase with a celerity that left no time for his master's agonised appeal to stay with him to reach his ears.

Jim was engaged with his chum, whose still partly dazed brain had not yet accommodated itself to the peculiar situation, when the solemn tramp of boots became audible up the stairway.

Twenty seconds later, four burly constables and a sergeant—Williams and the other servant keeping discreetly in the rear—emerged upon the landing.

"Well, Mr. Golson, and where, sir, is the 'ousebreaker you copped so clever?" asked the sergeant, with some deference.

"Two of them, officer—there they are!" shrilled the house-owner, pointing at Jim and Paul. "The one standing up I asked into the house to protect me, and he turns out to be worse than the other. Arrest them, sergeant!"

The sergeant moved forward uncertainly.

"You give 'em both in charge, sir?" he asked, with some hesitation. "Pretty used up, both of 'em!"

"They have been fighting desperately."

"One ag'in the other, sir?" The intelligent sergeant was surprised. "But I thought you said as they was confederates?"

"So they are. Both belong to the gang that has been about the house!"

"Then why did they fight each other, Mr. Golson?"

Jim, who had not spoken yet, thought it time to offer some explanation. In a few words he described the camp, the meeting with Mr. Golson, and the strange disappearance of his chum.

"You lef' that note stuck in a stick by a tent?" demanded the officer suddenly. "Boy on a bike come for the p'lice to go to Furze Common, an' we all come along together. You say your friend disappeared——"

"Yes; but he's found, though I never dreamt he was here."

And Jim pointed to Holmes.

"Then why have you been fighting?" the sergeant asked.

Scrambling to his feet with Jim's assistance, Paul stared about him, presently catching sight of Williams and the second servant.

"They're the two who set on me!" he cried excitedly, turning to Jim. "And he"—this was Mr. Golson—"was looking on all the time. They got me down, hustled me through the garden, and shut me up here; and what for I can no more tell you——"

"But I thought you were one of the gang of thieves who are hanging about here," Mr. Golson said weakly.

The sergeant winked at Jim.

"I think, sir, it's just a mistake, sir. Don't you worry no more," he said kindly to Mr. Golson. "They ain't thieves, 'cos if they was, would they have been fighting, as you say they was—an' pretty tough fighting, it seems? Let's go down an' talk it over, sir. And as it's a warmish night, and we've come a long way, an' in a hurry, sir, being a bit dry, sir——"

"And perhaps you can give us some hot water and arnica," added Jim.

"Paul, I never knew you could fight so hard," he whispered, as the sergeant's suggestion was acted upon.

Paul groaned.

Certainly he and his chum had come off worst, though the relief of finding Paul alive caused Jim to forget his bruises.

Particularly expeditious in getting prepared for supper, Paul had strolled through the wood for a look around. He had been promptly seen by Mr. Golson, whose fear of housebreakers had become almost a mania since the actual robbery at his house a few months earlier, a couple of servants were called up, and, after a fierce struggle, Paul had been overpowered. What happened after was, as the sergeant said, when the explanations were made, "easier than eating your dinner."

"But what I can't make out," said Jim, when, the matter amicably settled, they started to spend what was left of the night in their tent—"what I can't make out is, why you didn't sing out while we were fighting in that room. If I'd heard your voice, I'd have recognised it, and we'd have stopped before any damage was done!"

"Why didn't you?" retorted his chum, holding up the lantern with which they had been furnished by Mr. Golson. "I'd have known your voice!"

But questions are easier asked than answered.

THE END.

Into Unknown Africa.

Conclusion of this Thrilling Adventure Serial.

"That's the end of it!" cried John, as the dust-cloud cut off his farewell look at the great desert. "And now for civilisation!"

Good-bye to the Wilds.

A week later John Strong, his white comrades, and Sunny Jim, stood at the edge of a grassy plain, facing the great Nubian desert, which rolled away before them like an ocean of brown sand.

Before them stood the Dingaya queen, proudly upright, with the captain of the guard at her side. And in the rear, gathered in silent semicircle, were the remnant of the Dingaya tribe, those who had escaped from the City of Sheba.

On the edge of the desert, a little way off, stood a little company of fuzzy-haired savages, surrounding a number of camels. Towards these men and their charges the queen now pointed, raising a slender brown arm, upon which silver bangles clinked musically.

"White stranger," she said to John. "Behold those who will guide you to the great Nile river. They are faithful men and they will not betray your trust, for they are my subjects. When you have reached the river, you will follow it, and it shall bring you, as I have heard, to those places where other white men will welcome you. More I cannot do for you, since you will not stay and help me to build a new city and a new nation in place of that which is destroyed."

John bowed, and gazed steadily at the queen.

"No, queen. The lion will go back to his lair, and a fish out of the river dies. So we white men, of a race other than yours, must go back to our brothers, and leave you. I thank you for what you have done."

The queen smiled.

"I need no thanks; you who have saved my life," she said. "When I was about to sentence you to death you saved me, and I could wish for no stouter heart or stronger arm to guard me than yours, white stranger. But my good captain here shall take your place, and we will make the Dingaya yet a very mighty nation, despite the death of those who were wont to serve me in the Leopard guard."

"There are many fine men left," said John. "And fortune will help you, even though the great city be buried."

"Yea," answered the queen. "We have yet to live our lives. Friends,' she added, motioning to the Dingaya captain at her side, "you are going, and it is here upon the desert edge that we must say farewell. But I would wish to give you a gift that will remind you that there was a queen whose life you saved in the mountains. Take this, stranger!"

She raised her hand and the Dingaya captain stepped forward, swung aside his leopard-skin cloak, and handed to John that same silver box over which Wolf had gloated in the hour of his death. It was open, and, gazing within, John gasped.

For the sunlight falling upon the contents was reflected in a thousand points of dazzling colour—green and scarlet, and orange and blue.

The box was filled with precious stones, with rubies and emeralds and diamonds—worth a king's ransom.

John took the box, and bowed low over the queen's hand.

"It is a royal gift," he said, "and again we thank you."

With a gesture of dissent the queen turned.

"I wish you farewell," she said softly, and strode slowly away towards her people.

"Farewell!" cried John and his comrades. "And fortune be with you, Dingaya!"

With that John turned, and motioned to his comrades to move off; and in five minutes they were mounting the camels which the queen had caused to be brought for their use.

As they did so the Dingaya tribe sent forth a deep shout of farewell, and a thousand spear heads gleamed in the sun.

At the same moment the sky was darkened, and, glancing up, John beheld a tawny dust cloud advancing across the desert, curling and tossing and towering up like a pillar towards the blue sky. The savages with him saw it also, and with shrill cries urged the camels forward, to avoid the path of the approaching sand-storm.

With queer, gurgling cries the great beasts swung into their stride, rocking and rolling, as they trotted over the soft sand. They descended into a hollow which hid the Dingaya tribe from sight, and when they mounted on the other side, the edge of the desert was veiled in the dust cloud that rolled along behind.

For one moment John gazed back. But the Dingaya were lost to sight. The dust cloud rolled between them and the white men like a curtain. John turned his face and gazed straight before him.

"That's the end of it, you chaps," he cried to his comrades. "And now for civilisation!"

* * * * *

There is little more to be told. Thanks to the queen's aid, the Nile was safely reached, and followed as far as Khartoum.

Thenceforward the journey was uneventful, and at last the travellers arrived at Cairo, where John made arrangements to have the stones valued, and the resulting huge sum of money divided.

"It'll be good pay for all our journey," he said, on the night when the valuation was made. "You'll be able to retire from business, Lavier, old chap. As for Dearley and Tom and I, we're off yachting in the South Seas, lookin' for a bit of excitement."

Lavier raised his hands in amazement.

"And you 'ave not seen enough! My faith, for me eet ees ze quiet life. But, oh, my good friends, I would willingly give 'alf ze money for ze glorious photographs that were burnt in ze City of Sheba!"

Tom laughed and then shook his head.

"No," he said. "It's best as it is. If Sheba's city had not been destroyed, you'd have had tourist parties going over to visit it before long. Think of the mob of tourists waiting on the queen! Ugh! As it is, no one but ourselves know of the place, and of the true history of Karl Wolf's villainy."

"Perhaps you are right," murmured Lavier. "An', after all, I do not wish to see Africa again."

"It's a great and a mysterious country," said John thoughtfully.

Then he raised a glass that stood before him.

"Here's good luck to the Dingaya queen and her people!" he added.

The travellers drank the toast and then fell to silence, thinking of the wondrous city that was buried for ever in the wilds—the lost City of Sheba.

THE END.

TO-MORROW'S A NEW DAY.

(*Continued from page 23.*)

John laughed to himself a little foolishly, and nursed his head between his hands. Then he turned his back upon the stool and gazed through the dusty windows at the street without, watching belated clerks flock home, and marking the gladness in their gait.

For some minutes he stood watching them, and frowning; and then he swung round and faced the stool again. He trembled.

"Who is the only one who can save Jules now?" he asked it.

"You, John," stared the stool.

John began to mutter to himself.

"'We are trusted,'" he was muttering—"'we are trusted to do something in the world which no one but ourselves can do.'" It was queer, he thought, how every word returned to him.

He went to his desk, and withdrew the petty cash-book and the box. He then took an old purse from his pocket, and fumbling to open it, produced three sovereigns—there were no more there—which, one by one, he dropped into the box.

And next, finding his pen and drawing the book to him, he converted the figure one into its bigger brother four.

Quickly now he returned to Jules's desk, and snatching the racing paper he tore it fiercely into little bits. And as he rummaged for the betting book his eyes fell on a scrap of paper which he had overlooked before. He picked it up and read it. It was an address apparently; the address of a small lodging-house by the docks.

John Min thought of the detectives in his stories. Then he folded the scrap of paper and slipped it in his waistcoat pocket.

His shabby coat and hat and muffler were on again, and he had reached the door, when he turned abruptly and went back. He laid his hand upon the empty stool.

"Jules," he whispered, "to-morrow's a new day."

* * * * * *

He found Jules in the lodging-house by the docks. That was an hour later, and the boy sat brooding in a dismal room, beside a plain deal table, alone, and fearful of his sin. He started guiltily as John came quietly across to him, then sprang up to his feet. But John's plain features had lightened to a smile, and his voice was gentle as he bade the boy sit still. Then he found another chair, and brought it to the table opposite Jules.

"Jules," he said gently, "whatever are you doing here?"

"They've sent you to take me to the police!" moaned Jules.

All the spirit, all the mischief, had gone out of him. His face was white and piteous.

"I didn't mean to steal, Min. I meant—I meant—to pay—it back."

"I know," said John again. "But that's how most thieves begin, Jules."

The lad's distress was piteous now.

"Let me go," he sobbed. "Oh, don't send me to gaol!"

John leaned across the table, and took one of the trembling hands in his.

"Get up, Jules," he said. "There! Be a man. Now listen!"

And Jules rose, trembling all over.

"You're never going to bet again," said John. "You're going to promise me, straight here, that you'll neither bet nor mix with boys who do. You see, I've put the money back, and no one knows but you and me. You're going to have another chance, Jules."

"Another chance?" cried Jules.

"Another chance, Jules. And nobody shall know but you and me, and nobody ever shall know so long as you keep straight. And now I'm going home with you to see your mother."

They went out quietly. But as they neared his mother's house, the boy stopped his companion, and, looking up with eyes that were a little misty, he whispered:

"Min, I'll never, never bet again. And I'll pay you back that money, bit by bit."

"I trust you," John replied, "because, Jules——"

"Yes?" the boy murmured, in an undertone.

"To-morrow's a new day, Jules—for both of us!"

And so "to-morrow" proved.

THE END.

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